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AUTEUR: Thérèse NILSKI

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CONFERENCE INTERPRETATION

IN CANADA

A STUDY FOR THE ROYAL COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY
ON BILINGUALISM AND BICULTURALISM

Thérèse Nilski

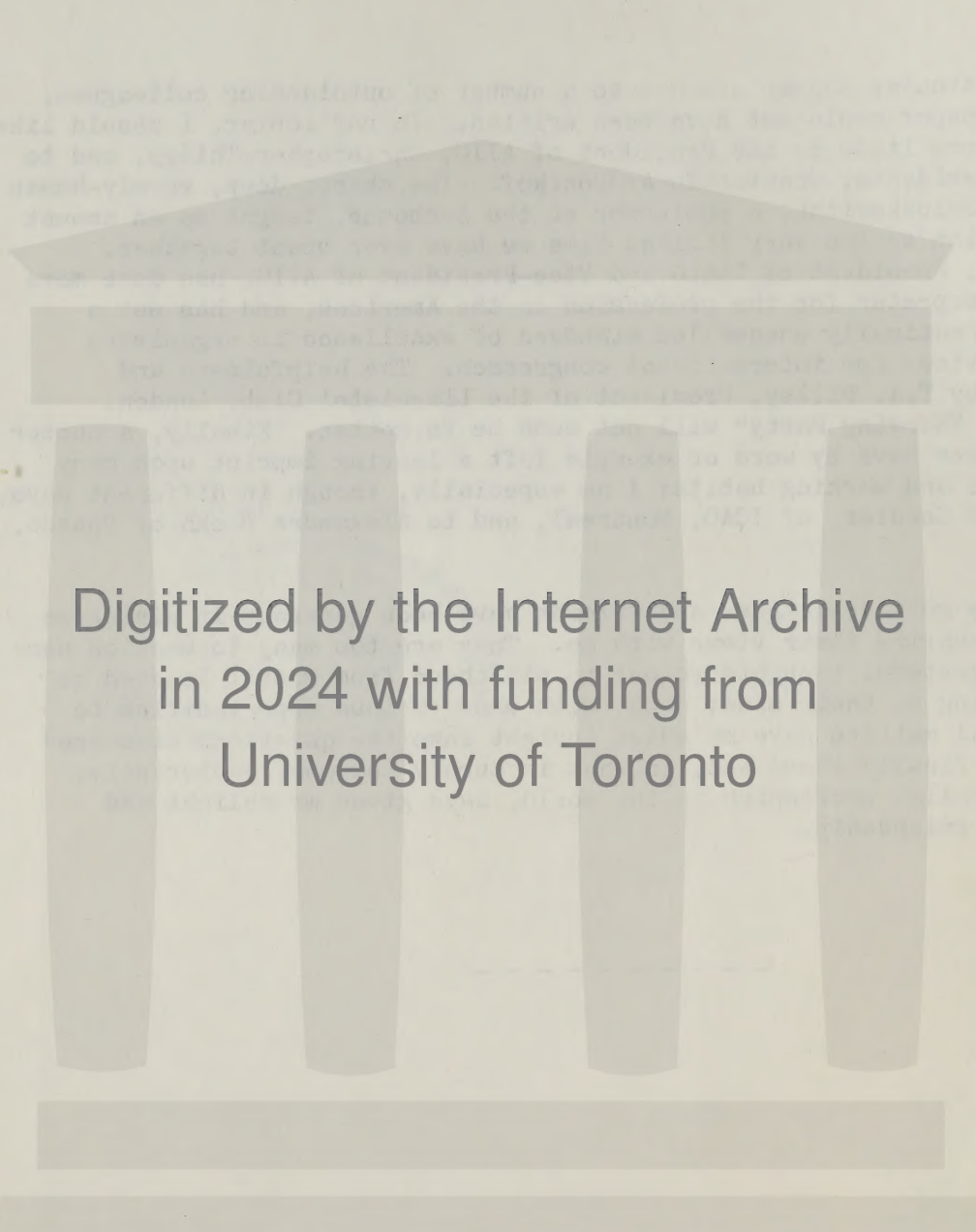
Montréal, 1965

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Very many more colleagues and friends have been generous in giving me their time and in sharing their views with me. They are too many to mention here individually. My grateful thoughts go out to all those from whom I learned so much through working at their side; those with whom various opportunities to discuss professional matters gave me added insight into the questions discussed in this paper; and finally those who, in what is surely the most exuberantly, wonderfully surrealist profession in the world, have given me delight and enjoyment in their friendship.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 The methods of overcoming the language barrier in a bilingual country have for some time been a matter of growing practical importance to ever wider circles of Canadians.

1.2 This process has been accelerated and stimulated by the interest aroused in, and through, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. While French Canadians have inevitably long been aware of the problems of overcoming a language barrier, the predominantly English-speaking rest of Canada has only recently, in the electronic age which cuts distances and multiplies contacts, personally come up against its vicissitudes on any large scale. All over Canada, people are making a more serious effort than ever to understand the real nature of the country. But while French Canadians have all along, by the nature of things, known about and largely taken for granted their part in the building of Canada (and are now intent on asking themselves the question: what use is Canada to them?) the rest of Canada's soul searching is producing a new recognition of the value of diversity contributed by the country's French-Canadian component; and is, more urgently than ever before, pressing for more and better communication between the two solitudes.

1.3 A number of suggestions have thus come before the Commission, on how to foster direct communication, and how to deal with the educational problem of making more Canadians bilingual (in the sense of McGill's definition: "Bilingualism consists of the ability to express oneself in one of Canada's languages and at the same time be able to understand the other official language of Canada").

1.4 A number of briefs have also suggested that, since direct communication is still so much a thing of the future, efforts should be made to extend the present use of translation (written) and interpretation (oral).

1.5 Thus, the Junior Bar Association, when presenting its brief in Montreal, proposed that simultaneous interpretation be made available in Canadian courts. The Ontario New Democratic Party, in its brief submitted in Toronto, asked that the government provide a pool of interpreters for meetings of government agencies as well as non-governmental organizations or associations. A number of briefs, including those by the Canadian Book Publishers' Council and the University of Toronto Press, dealt with some of the problems of translation.

1.6 Both translation and interpretation are essentially tools of communication, and as such have a number of elements in common. It is a fairly widespread misconception,

however, that the only difference lies in the sound-conveying equipment required for interpretation. In fact, the differences go deeper: the two techniques give rise to a number of dissimilar problems*, and are therefore best treated separately.

1.7 It will therefore be the purpose of this paper to give the Royal Commission a bird's eye view of the present and possible uses of interpretation in Canada, both in Quebec and in the rest of the country.

1.8 Conference interpretation will be taken to mean the oral reproduction, in another language, of the statements made during a meeting or discussion. While Canada has seen a rapid growth of this technique in recent years, and more is called for, few Canadians are aware of the practical implications, the advantages and limitations of the tool, and the problems involved: notably, the circumstances in which it can be used effectively, its inevitably high cost, the present shortage of qualified

* "The Planning of International Meetings" -- a handbook published under the joint auspices of Unesco and WHO (see para 3.6 below) -- has this to say: "Before going into detail, we shall clarify the meaning that the words 'translation' and 'interpretation' have acquired in the rather specialized terminology of international organizations. The word 'translation' should be restricted to written communications. The word 'interpretation' on the other hand should be used when referring to the extemporaneous verbal rendering in another language of a spoken or written statement. Great accuracy can be expected of a translation. With interpretation, accuracy must be sacrificed to some extent in favour of speed, although the accuracy of the work of a first-rate interpreter is amazing". Not only the set-up and the working conditions, but also the mental processes, and the aptitudes and skills involved in interpretation are different from those called for in translation. (See Appendix VII-4).

interpreters in Canada (and indeed throughout the world, except possibly in Europe), as well as the difficulties of providing an adequate supply of qualified people, even for the future.

1.9 This study will attempt to describe these factors, with emphasis on Canadian experience so far. Comparisons will also be made with the solutions worked out elsewhere in response to similar problems.

1.10 While in fact written for the Royal Commission, the paper addresses itself more immediately, and is of more direct concern, to several other groups of Canadians interested in various aspects of the subject. They include: conference organizers on the look-out for efficient ways of providing their meetings with interpretation; would-be interpreters; and institutions or people who may be planning to provide interpreter-training programs. With the disparate needs of such audiences in mind, the paper is to some extent fragmentary and perhaps repetitive. But it may, eventually, serve as a basis for preparing background information and specific practical pointers for the use of each of these groups.

Methods of Interpretation

2.1 Since interpretation is essentially a tool for oral communication between people in a group, it has had to adapt itself to the varying requirements of different types of meetings.

2.2 The most adaptable, and commonly used, form of interpretation is the relatively new simultaneous, which appeared and developed with the advent of electronic equipment in the 1940-ies and 1950-ies. It lends itself to being used at large or small meetings, for formal speeches and informal discussion, as well as for a varying number and combination of languages. Naturally, the greater the number of languages and participants, the more complex the arrangements required. Full-scale simultaneous interpretation is a specialized and complicated service; Part IV will be devoted to a fuller look at its requirements.

2.3 While simultaneous interpretation -- with its microphones, booths, and earphones -- is the form most used at present, and therefore the one best known, other methods not requiring this equipment are also possible.

2.4 Simplified forms of simultaneous interpretation may be used in special circumstances, notably for small two-language meetings where only a few of the participants have difficulty in following the main language.

Reduced to its simplest form, the method just consists of whispering into a delegate's ear. Two delegates at the most can be assisted in this way, without unduly disturbing the rest of the meeting. It is a method frequently used by visiting Soviet delegations, who bring their own interpreters. When the delegate in turn wants to speak, the interpreter translates his remarks consecutively.

2.5 Where there are more than two listeners, a simplified form of equipment is sometimes the solution; there is no booth, the interpreter listens without earphones and whispers into a shielded microphone (unkindly known in the profession as "le bidule" or "the spittoon"). The delegates hear the interpretation through earphones. Needless to say, this is a second-best solution, applicable in out-of-the-way places where high cost is a factor (e.g. the U.S. Department of State uses this method for groups of foreign dignitaries escorted on tours throughout the country).

2.6 All forms of whispered interpretation have the disadvantage of being extremely exhausting for the interpreter and somewhat distracting for the participants. Their advantage is that they require no elaborate installation.

2.7 Consecutive interpretation is the second, and time-hallowed, method of exercising the art. The interpreter takes notes while the speaker is giving his paper or making his speech, and afterwards gives the complete

interpretation. A good interpreter can reproduce even hour-long speeches with show-stopping accuracy and brilliance. No equipment is needed, but it is time-consuming, and particularly cumbersome when more than two official languages are employed. Also, if highly technical questions are discussed, this system may give relatively poor results; the interpreters cannot be expected to have the same intimate grasp of scientific matters as the participants. Nevertheless, it does have a certain number of advantages in the right circumstances. It is especially efficient -- and economical -- for small, two-language, working or drafting meetings, where accuracy is important. The interpretation can be readily checked, speakers have pauses for reflection, and actually time is often saved through avoiding semantic misunderstandings and through discouraging repetitive discussion. That is why it is still favoured by e.g. technical committees of the International Telecommunications Union. The method also lends itself to being used at press conferences; and provides the right flourish on diplomatic occasions, such as visits by foreign heads of state.

2.8 Consecutive interpretation (which had its hey-day between the two world wars) is still fairly widely used in Europe (where interpreters practice it 15-20% of their time). Here, in North America, it is practically non-existent (except at the UN Security Council). Possibly this is so because we are richer and do not hesitate to

use the costlier methods; possibly because consecutive interpretation involves sophistication and habit; and finally also because, in Canada particularly, it is quite currently practised, but without being known by the name. Not infrequently, at board-of-directors' meetings, for instance, or at meetings of labour-union locals, where there are both English- and French-speaking members, the chairman or one of the officers repeats all statements in either of the two languages for the benefit of those who do not understand them both. This is taken very much as a matter of course -- and, like Mr. Jourdain who was startled to learn he was speaking prose, the members are unaware that they are listening to one of the most tradition-honoured and exacting forms of interpretation: consecutive. The drawback, of course, is that the chairmanship this produces is apt to be even more undistinguished than the interpretation...

2.9 Although at present the practical applications of consecutive interpretation have tended to become rather vestigial, it is a method that still has an important role to play: it is invaluable in the training of competent interpreters -- however simultaneous they may later be called upon to be. More on this in Part VII below.

THE TYPES OF MEETINGS THAT USE INTERPRETATION

3.1 A list of the conferences and bodies that have been using interpretation in Canada is given at Appendix A. They cover a wide range and variety of circumstances.

3.2 Government Meetings - The growing use of interpretation by the federal government (in Parliament, since 1959, at Federal-Provincial Conferences, at inter-ministerial meetings, and by Royal Commissions of Enquiry, should be made subject of a separate study.*

3.3 Meetings of International Organizations - ^{Practically} since Montreal became the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization in 1945, Canada has been the only American country to host a Specialized Agency of the United Nations. The United Nations family has been the largest word-wide user of interpretation, both at Headquarters in New York, at the sites of its various Specialized Agencies (Unesco, ILO, WHO, FAO, ITU, etc.) and and at innumerable conferences and meetings organized throughout the world. It has, in fact, largely contributed to developing and establishing present interpreting practices, and to setting standards of quality for both the organization of meetings and for the exercise of interpretation; and has trained a body of first-class professional interpreters many of whom are still on its permanent staffs, in New York, Geneva, Montreal and elsewhere. At peak periods, and for large conferences, the international

* I have insufficient direct personal experience of them to cover this subject adequately.

organizations call upon the services of free-lance interpreters to supplement their permanent staffs. On the other hand, the occasional availability of a core of permanent U.N. and I.C.A.O. staff members for outside conferences has been a source of strength to the North-American free-lance circuit.

3.4 I would suggest that, if it is decided to make the study mentioned in paragraph 3.2 above, both the well tested United-Nations system, and the efficient organization of interpretation services in the U.S. State Department, be taken as a base for comparison and a reference point.

3.5 There are, in fact, no rigid divisions between the various types of meetings described in this Part. Some organizations and conferences require the services of both free-lance and permanent interpreters. Certain congresses consist of plenaries with full-scale 5-language interpretation, committees working in two or three languages and e.g. executive meetings that only need consecutive interpretation. Broadly speaking, however, the paragraphs above have referred to interpretation services provided by a permanent staff; while the paragraphs below will describe the meetings generally serviced on a free-lance basis.

3.6 International Congresses -- Many international medical, scientific, technical and professional associations hold world-wide congresses at two-to five-year intervals in different parts of the world in rotation. These are usually huge, formal, multi-lingual meetings at which carefully-prepared scientific papers and the results of the latest research are presented by the foremost specialists in the field. They are usually organized in the big cities' largest hotels: New York, and to some extent Washington, are often chosen as the sites; but Montreal, possibly because of its French character, and possibly also because of Canada's attitude towards the Eastern bloc, tends to attract a good many such meetings. Their complex preparation and organization is generally in the hands of the national association -- e.g. the Canadian Paediatric Society acted as host to the World Paediatric Congress. The same association is unlikely to organize more than one such congress in a life span, and therefore finds it important to rely on a sum of experience and advice available from other sources. A useful handbook on "The Planning of International Meetings" has been published by the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences established under the joint auspices of Unesco and WHO (Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford)*. It deals, among other things, with how

* ref. para. 1.6. above.

to provide for interpretation and states at the outset:

No large international congress should be organized nowadays without simultaneous interpretation, but it must be borne in mind that the organization of an interpretation service is costly and difficult and is best left in the hands of a competent person. Second-class interpretation is worse than none from the point of view of communication. Financially, it is tantamount to throwing good money away.

3.6.1 Hence the importance of starting off by appointing an experienced and competent "Chief Interpreter". His duties will be to help select and recruit a qualified team of interpreters: often a formidable task, since first-class interpreters are few and far between, and interpreters specializing in scientific or technical subjects are scarcer still. At least two interpreters per language are required; but where the number of languages exceeds three, or the combination involves languages infrequently used at international meetings, the number of interpreters required rises steeply (see para. 4.4 below). Moreover, since interpretation may be needed at several concurrent sessions, several teams of interpreters may be required. It is not unusual, therefore, for a congress to have to recruit 15 to 25 interpreters. That number can seldom be found locally; which is why there are constant exchanges between New York, Washington, Montreal and even Mexico (the largest North-American concentrations of interpreters) and why, occasionally, European interpreters have to be brought over

for congresses in North America, while North-American interpreters are sometimes called upon to work as far afield as Tokyo, Delhi, or Australia. In fact, there are peak periods of the year, into which a great many international congresses need to be fitted; and as the number of good interpreters is limited, a congress is unlikely to be able to get first-rate service unless it has made its arrangements well ahead of time, generally over a year in advance.

3.6.2 Besides recruitment (which includes the preparation of contracts, and advice on financial and travel arrangements), the Chief Interpreter will be responsible for advising the congress on conference planning, to permit the most effective and economical use of interpreting services. His experience with equipment companies and installations may be valuable to the organizers (See Part IV, B).

3.6.3 The Chief Interpreter will also, together with the congress, set up the briefing sessions needed before highly specialized conferences. The interpreters are given one or more days on full pay to study the terminology and subject-matter of the meeting and are given a chance to consult specialists (whose mother tongues are the official languages of the meeting) -- (ref. Part IVA, para. 4.7).

3.6.4 The Chief Interpreter also helps the congress to organize a documentation committee, whose task it is to

obtain beforehand all copies of papers to be read out at the meeting, for advance preparation by the interpreters. This is a thorny task, for speakers generally have to be hounded to death before they'll consent, at last, to deliver their brain-children into philistine hands; but, for the reasons explained in ^{section} ~~paragraph~~ 4.6 below, it is essential to the success of the meeting.

3.6.5 Finally, during the course of the congress itself, the Chief Interpreter will be responsible for looking after the interpretation arrangements, assisting his colleagues, and ensuring co-ordination with the congress authorities.

3.7 Arrangements for meetings other than full-scale international congresses are proportionately less elaborate. The principles remain the same, but the services become simpler as the function decreases in complexity.

3.8 Seminars, round-table discussions, study groups and technical conferences are based not so much on the presentation to large audiences of written papers, as on free-ranging discussion between a number of participants. Again, it is important to select a team of interpreters suitable in terms of the meeting's work-load, subject, and language combinations. As always, this is best done through advance consultation with a competent and experienced interpreter. Proper physical facilities are as essential here as elsewhere (see section IV-B below).

3.9 In Canada, there is a wide range of meetings which do not quite fall into either the congress, or the working-group category. They include political rallies, with platform speeches by politicians; panel discussions before a large or a small audience; lectures accompanied by slides or films and sometimes followed by public discussion; sales-promotion conventions with their three-ring-circus hoop-la; meetings of labour unions, local, provincial or national; and the different meetings called by a wide variety of national associations: medical and scientific societies, as well as legal, political, social and trade groups. Finally, interpretation is sometimes required at labour-management negotiations, company press conferences, or meetings of various boards.* In each case, it is important to have a realistic assessment made of the actual circumstances and needs: which speakers, in what languages, will have to be interpreted for what audience? Only too often the organizers just think in terms of getting a couple of interpreters and a lot of head-sets; and end up by having an inefficient service, with improperly selected and inadequately-briefed interpreters, which is either wastefully costly or self-defeatingly cheap.

3.10 Finally, interpretation is occasionally used for purposes other than meetings: for radio or television

* See Appendix A

programs, in courts-of-law or arbitration proceedings, or in escorting foreign delegations. Since the possible arrangements are multiple and flexible (especially in television, where tie-in is important, and technique has great visual and emotional impact so that new approaches are constantly being worked out), it is very advisable that the persons responsible be familiar with the relative merits and disadvantages of the various practicable forms of interpretation and installation.

3.11 This Part has dealt with the modalities of interpretation as a tool of communication. There is, however, an incidental marginal benefit which might be mentioned: namely, the possible didactic value of the service. In the United Nations, many an English- or French-speaking delegate has picked up a smattering of Spanish or Russian simply by listening to the interpreters while the familiar speeches drone on. At Canadian meetings, it is surprising how often people will come up and say, "You know, I don't really need this ear-plug, I understand quite a bit of French, but it's a wonderful way of checking up on what I think I know"; or they will hold out the little transistor set and remark "This is one way of practising my French!"

3.11.1 In this sense, interpretation not only helps to communicate; it teaches how to communicate. The University of Toronto Press (in a different context it is true -- page 5 of its brief) stated its "optimism... concerning

the prospect of improving the ability to communicate between Canadians whose mother-tongue is French or English, through increasing frequency of contacts". Conference interpretation has a role to play here -- although it would probably be excessively sanguine, at this point, to see it as self-liquidating in even just the Canadian context!

3.11.2 It might, however, be interesting to investigate to what extent the bulk of Ottawa MP's who have now had simultaneous interpretation for several years, have in fact been helped to feel more "at home" with French. In 1957, at a NATO meeting, Mr. Pearson who was then Leader of the Opposition mentioned in a private conversation that he was opposed to
^ the then-contemplated introduction of simultaneous interpretation in the House. It would just encourage English-speaking MPs to drop their erstwhile efforts to learn French, he said. To what extent has time borne out his initial assumption -- or invalidated it?

PART IV

REQUIREMENTS FOR SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION:

- A. Qualified interpreters;
 - B. The right equipment and installation;
 - C. Users informed on how to get the most out of their investment
-

4.1 Criteria of Quality

Renowned interpreters, the high priests of the profession, are not averse to surrounding themselves with some of the awe that cloaks man's more occult pursuits. But interpretation is, of course, neither magic nor mystery. It is a tool; a tool that must restore instant communication wherever language places a barrier to direct understanding. Like any expensive and delicate instrument, it must be handled proficiently. To be at all good, it has to be very good; anything produced short of understanding can only amount to misunderstanding.

There is no half-measure; and so, any compromise with quality merely defeats interpretation's purpose. Instead of a precise tool, what the conference ends up with is a plaything, a toy. Even in this field, a toy is occasionally called for; once in a while, a meeting is only in the market for the current status-symbol of "bilingualism". But, unless chosen deliberately for that purpose, a toy is a poor bargain and will not perform the work of the tool.

This particular tool has three elements, any one of which can, if defective, jeopardize the whole tool's usefulness.

This Part will attempt to lay down specifications for each of the three.

However, in actual use, although each element may and should be rated individually, the usefulness of interpretation for any given meeting must be judged as a whole. To be satisfactory, it must meet the overall tests of 1. clarity, 2. faithfulness and 3. unobtrusiveness.

4.1.1 The listeners must be able to hear and to understand; this involves not only good listening sets and proper adjustment of equipment volumes and tone, but also clear, intelligible presentation and distinct enunciation by the interpreters.

4.1.2 Faithfulness implies more than first strikes the eye; the interpreter must be sufficiently in command of the language and the subject-matter, and must also know enough of the speaker's background, to convey accurately not only his train of thought, but also his mood and personality. Adequate preparation and, again, proper hearing facilities for the interpreter are thus involved.

4.1.3 Finally, good interpretation must not interfere with the proceedings; it must not be distracting to the participants. There should be no technical or other hitches that interrupt the flow of the meeting; sound-proof booths are required to cut down on noise; and interpreters must not let their voice, pronunciation, hesitations or mannerisms distract listeners' attention

from the subject. If, after a short period of getting used to the system, the participants are being helped to communicate spontaneously, naturally, almost without being aware of the intervening language barrier -- then the interpretation (i.e. the overall service) is doing its job properly.

Now back to evaluating its three essential components.

IV.A - Qualified Interpreters

4.2 Judging the quality of an interpreter's work is not always easy for someone who is not already thoroughly familiar with the system. A casual listener or reader can more readily say, for instance, whether a journalist or broadcaster is doing his job well or poorly. But interpretation is a relatively new technique and involves the unfamiliar exercise of listening to a different language with each ear. If the listener does not know the language of the speaker, he cannot really say whether the interpretation is bad or whether the original speech is unclear. Even if he does happen to know both languages, his initial reaction is one of incredulity or amazement, for even a poor interpreter is more skilled at transposing one language into another than the listener. It takes some time and encouragement, therefore, for the public to develop a critical ear -- and so the best guarantee of good performance is still acceptance by other interpreters in the light of the standards of professional practice developed by the interpreters themselves over the years.

4.2.1 An eminent interpreter at the Quai d'Orsay,

C. Andronikof, puts the problem this way:

/Il nous faut/ prendre conscience de ce que nous sommes des linguistes, et non des polyglottes habiles à traduire des mots. Un linguiste, dans ce sens, c'est quelqu'un qui connaît non seulement des termes et leurs équivalents dans d'autres langues, mais encore les structures et les fonctions du langage, qui sait ce que parler veut dire, et pourquoi.

L'interprète doit savoir suivre non seulement toute démarche du langage, mais encore tout cheminement de la pensée. Nous ne transposons pas des vocables, nous donnons une forme aux idées exprimées par autrui dans le génie d'une autre langue. Et si, dans telle circonstance, nous nous y sentons incapables ou insuffisants, il faut nous l'interdire, comme nous l'interdirions à un débutant. *

4.3 Thus, as AIIC** states in its study on the language classification of interpreters (DA/9/00): "On n'est pas interprète en général, on est interprète pour certaines langues, dans certains sens linguistiques". It is one of the cornerstones of professional practice, now universally accepted, that individual interpreters work into and from particular languages according to a system of ratings established by AIIC and already closely followed throughout the world. This classification defines the categories of professional practice undertaken by particular interpreters. The AIIC and TAALS** Yearbooks rate as A, B or C their members' qualifications in the languages they use at work. This classification is defined

* Rapport du Président de l'AIIC à l'Assemblée de 1963.

** AIIC - l'Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence (see Part V, para 5.7, passim).

TAALS - The American Association of Language Specialists - do.

as follows:

A - the principal active language (or languages, when they are on exactly the same level) (1)

B - other active languages (1)

C - passive languages (2)

(1) Active languages: those into which members interpret.

(2) Passive languages: those into which members do not interpret but of which they have a complete understanding, and from which they interpret into their active languages.

4.3.1 And AIIC explains:

... le travail d'un interprète en langue "A" est le plus aisé, le plus élégant et, pour l'usager, le plus convaincant ainsi que le plus agréable à écouter... C'est presque toujours la langue que l'on appelle communément 'maternelle'. Cependant, cette notion de langue 'maternelle' est difficile à utiliser dans une profession telle que celle des interprètes, qui ont souvent acquis plusieurs langues au cours de leur enfance, de leur adolescence et de leurs études. (cf page 61)

L'A.I.I.C. a donc opéré jusqu'ici au moyen de la notion 'sans se distinguer d'un autochtone'. Précisons tout de suite que 'sans se distinguer d'un autochtone' ne se réfère pas uniquement à l'accent, il faut de plus que la construction soit idiomatique, que le débit soit aisé, il faut que la richesse des moyens d'expression corresponde à ce que l'on est en droit d'attendre d'un 'autochtone cultivé', qui a toujours parlé cette langue et qui a fait ses classes en cette langue.

4.3.2 At the other end of the scale "C", or the passive language, presents a very clear cut case. But it is the category "B" in between, "the other active languages" that is a more troublesome one to define, for it covers a whole range of possibilities. These are the languages

that do not quite measure up to "A" standards, i.e. are distinguishable from the speech of an educated native-born person, but which the interpreter uses fluently.

But a reputable translator will not accept to interpret into his B language at an exacting meeting, although he may very well work into his B in consecutive or, occasionally, at easier meetings, in simultaneous.

4.3.3 Because of the essential stringency of the necessary language qualifications, few interpreters use more than three or four languages at work, and few have more than one A (about 20% have two A's while three A's are quite uncommon; only three out of AIIC's 444 members in 1962).

4.4 A corollary is that, at multilingual conferences, the number of interpreters required rises steeply. Where three languages are used, there are six language combinations, or "ways". With four languages, there are twelve language "ways", four times three. With five languages there are no fewer than twenty language combinations and that entails a highly complex operation. Because it is difficult and indeed sometimes impossible to find a team of interpreters who can cover all those twenty "ways" directly, the unusual language combinations are covered by the relay system (for instance a French interpreter who does not understand German "interprets" a German speech not from the original, but

in relay from what he hears his English or Spanish colleague saying). This is a disagreeable and often perilous procedure, to be used only as a last resort*. Ideally, therefore, at multi-lingual meetings the team should consist of N multiplied by $(N - 1)$ interpreters, where N represents the number of languages used at the conference. In Europe, AIIC follows a complicated system of "grandes et petites équipes" to meet the problem of language "ways". In America, the current practice is to recruit two to three interpreters per language in such cases.

4.5 In Canada, three- to five-language conferences are not too frequent. At a guess, 80% to 90% of interpreters' working time here is spent at bilingual meetings (which only involve two language "ways"). After a good deal of trial and error, it has become established as a sound working rule that a normal day's workload at a bilingual meeting requires a team of three interpreters. Where the proportion of English and French is more or less evenly balanced, one of the interpreters should have an A in French, the other an A in English and, ideally, the third one should rate an A in both English and French. This allows interpreters to relieve each other every 15 to 30 minutes.

* I owe the above description of language "ways" to a distinguished colleague, A.T. Pilley of London --- as explained in *inter alia* his pamphlet, "The Techniques of International Conference Interpreting", published by the Institute of Linguists, London, W.2.

4.5.1 A "balanced" meeting is, however, as unusual as an "average" man. It is therefore important to establish the actual proportion of English and French to be spoken, so as to get together just the right team of interpreters. Recruitment of the best possible team for each specific instance is one of the most esoteric aspects of the whole business, and one whose handling very definitely calls for experience and sound advice.

4.6 Interpreting written texts

A question interpreters are frequently asked is: "But how can you keep up if the speaker is very fast?". Curiously enough this is seldom a major problem in itself. It is a problem to follow a muddled speaker, or one who cannot be heard clearly, or one who is speaking on a subject the interpreter knows nothing about, but a brilliant fast speaker is often easier than a very slow and ponderous one. As long as the speaker is intelligible to his audience directly, the experienced and briefed interpreters can generally keep up.

4.6.1 But any difficulty is compounded whenever a speaker is no longer speaking, but reading a prepared text. Interpretation is geared to the kind of communication that occurs during speech; written texts should, ideally, call for written translation. The thought process is different in the two instances and so is the vehicle of communication. In writing, the subject is carefully thought out and precisely drafted; there are fewer words, they are used more meaningfully, the sentence structure and style are apt to be more involved

and also more literary. The writer has taken pains over his draft, moving a sentence here and changing a word there. Instead of putting his thought into words as he goes along and addressing his listeners directly (however brilliant and fluent and articulate a speaker may be, an interpreter's brain circuits have a chance of ticking along at the same rate) the "speaker" who reads his message conveys it in a more remote, condensed and linear form; and it is far more touch-and-go whether the interpreter will manage to take in and to convey all he is hearing for the first time, without leaving gaps or making mistakes. That will depend on a number of factors: mainly the subject matter, its complexity, and the rate of delivery. It is one of the unfortunate facts of life that written texts are almost invariably read out faster and more colourlessly than if they were spoken. They are then that much harder to follow and understand. For all these reasons it is unfair to expect an interpreter to do a first-rate job of interpreting a complex written text he has never seen before. If the speaker has gone to the trouble of writing out his text, and wants full justice done to it, he should get it translated in advance, also in writing. Otherwise, he should see to it that his interpreters get a chance to study the text before the meeting at which it is to be delivered, to get acquainted with the train of thought and particularly to look up any scientific

technical or unusual details or terminology. Being handed a written text just as the speech is about to begin is worse than useless: trying to listen, to read, to understand and to speak intelligibly all at the same time is unlikely to be a successful exercise. In fact, few good interpreters like to follow a written text while they are interpreting; even if they have studied the text in advance, their work is likely to be better if they concentrate on listening once the actual moment comes.

4.6.2 AIIC writes on this subject:

" L'expérience prouve que l'on ne rapelle jamais assez que l'interprétation simultanée ne doit pas être confondue avec une sorte de traduction à vue: un traducteur lit puis écrit: son rythme de travail, fonction de la difficulté du texte, varie entre 100 et 500 mots à l'heure; l'interprète doit écouter et parler simultanément: il doit travailler à la vitesse à laquelle parle l'orateur: 6,000 à 8,000 mots par heure. "

Incidentally, it is in this context interesting to note the comparative workloads handled by the two sister professions, interpreting and translating:

" D. Seleskovitch a calculé que dans l'hypothèse d'une séance de sept heures (dont six en moyenne seraient consacrées à la parole) en "grande équipe"*, chaque interprète effectue 33% du travail, donc 2 heures. A environ 120 mots par minute, il fait 14,500 mots. En "petite équipe"* il accomplit 50% du travail, soit 3 heures et 21,500 mots. Si le traducteur, à journée égale, compose entre 6 et 7 pages, il fait de 1,500 à 1,750 mots. Donc, en mots, l'interprète travaille 7 à 8 fois plus en "grande équipe" et 11 fois plus en "petite

*A "Grande équipe" or full team for e.g. a two language conference will consist of three interpreters, a "small" or condensed team, in special circumstances, of two -- see 4.4 above.

équipe" que le traducteur. Cela n'enlève rien à celui-ci, mais précise l'intensité du labeur de celui-là, sans compter les autres facteurs. " (Andronikof, Rapport à l'Assemblée de l'AIIC, '63)

4.6.3 This calculation also throws light on why it is impossible to expect off-the-cuff interpretation of a written text to measure up in accuracy and style to a good translation. On the other hand, in practice, interpreters are sometimes handed a prepared translation of a speech, which unfortunately turns out to be a poor translation: unidiomatic or inaccurate; but a good interpreter should normally have no difficulty in correcting such shortcomings for the live audience as he goes along.

4.7 Preparatory Documentation and Briefing

Throughout this section, it is assumed that the interpreters have the necessary aptitudes, educational background, training, and other prerequisites mentioned in Part VII. But however well-educated, qualified and experienced they are, they will need to do a certain amount of study and brushing-up before the great variety and range of conferences they will be dealing with. For instance I have myself, just during the writing of this paper, worked in areas as diverse as: general economics, politics and current affairs, interspersed with the following specialized subjects -- in that order -- :
stomatology, air-traffic control and telecommunications, anaesthesiology, right-of-way legislation, medical research

in a variety of fields, criminology, the lumber and pulp industry, psychiatry, computers and information processing, book publishing, and architecture, (at both Canadian and world-wide meetings). Different degrees of preparation are of course required for different conferences. For some, the interpreter has to study text-books and manuals in advance, preferably in the two or three languages involved; in such cases a two-day period of briefing is also required to prepare papers and consult specialists (see para. 3.6.3.). But even at best, where the subject-matter and terminology are already familiar, the interpreter will need to refresh his memory, to do some brushing-up on the subject and the terminology, possibly to find out about the background of the organization and to become familiar with the names of the participants, and also preferably do some related reading in his own active language to get into the spirit of the thing.

4.7.1 From past experience, the following documentation should be provided in advance: in all cases, a detailed program of the meeting indicating speakers and subjects; and, as required, a list of the participants, the constitution and by-laws of the organization as well as any financial or statistical reports, and background material for technical and scientific subjects; also, invariably, of course, any written texts to be read out. Experience shows that both organizers and participants are never suffi-

ciently informed, reminded, and hounded about this.

4.8 Film showings

Films shown during a meeting present a special problem, if they are to be interpreted. The difficulties arise out of the split-second timing involved, the presence of background music that tends to make the words less intelligible, and frequently the poor quality of sound if the movie has been run many times. For these reasons, if interpretation is really required, special precautions need to be taken;

- 1) The sound-engineers must see to it beforehand that the sound-track output is directly connected to the interpreter's earphones. Distortion is magnified if a room microphone is merely put near the projector's loud-speaker.
- 2) The interpreter should preview the film at least a couple of times before the actual screening; and preferably should, if at all possible, be supplied with the written script. Interpreting a film is, in fact, apt to be almost as laborious as dubbing to be at all satisfactory.

4.9 Taping of proceedings

It will be clear from all the above that, while interpretation may be perfectly intelligible when listened to -- since tone and inflexion may make up for many liberties with syntax -- it is likely to be disappointing when

transcribed to serve as a record or translation of the proceedings. Using interpretation in this way is, therefore, apt to be of dubious value; but, if really necessary, special arrangements may be made at the discretion of the interpreter. Since interpretation is essentially furnished for the convenience of participants at the meeting, should tape recordings be taken for other purposes, e.g. broadcasting or press releases, they are considered to be an additional separate service.

IV.B

Technical Equipment

4.10 The second essential ingredient in satisfactory interpretation is good technical equipment, looked after by experts, working without a hitch, adjusted to the special requirements of each meeting.

4.11 Permanent installations are invariably superior to portable systems. They alone can provide perfectly sound-proof, yet well-ventilated booths, a high quality of reception for both interpreters and delegates, and adequate standards of comfort and convenience for everyone involved. Unfortunately, there are as yet in Canada all too few conference rooms with adequate provision for such installations. The United Nations in New York and the State Department in Washington have conference rooms that are probably among the best equipped in the world, besides being spacious, sound-proofed and air-conditioned. In

Montreal, ICAO has several well-equipped rooms; and the University of Montreal has a small conference room it uses mainly for training purposes. EXPO '67 is thinking of installing permanent interpretation equipment in several conference rooms. Curiously enough, Montreal's largest (and still most recent) convention center, the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, neglected to consult experienced people early enough in the planning stage, before and during construction; and by the time it sought their advice, it proved to be too late and too expensive to remodel the utterly unsuitable space provided. As a result, the very many meetings that use interpretation there every month have to make do with the far less satisfactory and in the long run more costly, portable equipment. Efforts are now being made to encourage architects to incorporate provision for interpretation facilities, early in the drawing-board stage, into the new convention-halls being built in the city, e.g. the Canadian Pacific's Château Champlain. Such early planning cuts language costs appreciably and should considerably improve the convention and conference facilities offered by this bilingual city par excellence.

4.12 In the absence of permanent equipment, portable systems have to be resorted to. They are leased out by a variety of private commercial enterprises and vary in quality a great deal. These days, they are usually of the

transistorized radio variety (i.e. delegates' earphones do not need to be wired) and are thus handier than the portable wired systems used even six or seven years ago. Only two or three big companies in North-America provide multi-channel equipment for three or more languages; several smaller companies rent out single-channel equipment for two-language meetings; but in every case, before signing a contract, conference organizers should make quite sure they are renting good equipment, looked after by competent technicians; and experienced interpreters can provide them with useful advice on this. In North-America such advice is almost invariably impartial: while there is in principle no ethical objection to e.g. interpreters who may hold a financial interest in an equipment company, in fact there has been a strong trend here (encouraged by the professional associations) for reputable interpreters to shy away from any such connections, in order to preserve complete independence towards other companies as well as towards organizers and colleagues.

4.13 AIIC is working out a full set of technical specifications for satisfactory interpretation equipment. Pending their publication, here are some basic pointers:

a) Good audibility is essential. The sound reaching the interpreters through the earphones must be sufficiently loud, clear, and free from any kind of interference and distortion --- which, though it might not unduly worry casual listeners and delegates would impair the interpreters'

concentration and hearing faculties and would therefore prove to be a considerable hindrance if not an obstacle to good interpretation.

b) The sound output (from booth to delegates) must also be carefully adjusted and controlled. Long stretches of listening through a "hearing aid" are a strain on delegates and every effort should be made to help them hear clearly. Public address systems are often incompatible with interpretation: their volume is set so loud that it drowns out whatever the interpreter is saying, and occasionally even causes feed-back into the speakers' own microphone. A cause of frequent difficulty lies in the fact that the loud-speakers are generally controlled, not by the equipment company, but by hotel electricians, who know little and care less about the interpretation. A competent equipment company will know, however, how to go about getting an obtrusive public address system toned down to the proper "sound-enhancement" level.

c) The sound engineers must make sure in advance of the meeting that the size and shape of the room are suitable for the required installation. Sufficient microphones have to be arranged for, where there is to be general discussion or discussion from the floor. Compatibility of microphones and other components

with equipment on the premises must be checked. If the speakers are to show slides, demonstrations, or to use the blackboard, they will have to be provided with roving neck microphones -- in advance, rather than in the middle of the proceedings. Screens or blackboards should also be placed within good sight of the interpreters in the booths.

d) Each of the rooms where interpretation is provided (there are sometimes several concurrently) must have a good sound engineer on duty and on watch throughout the meeting. It is his responsibility to have the equipment checked and in proper working order from the very start of the meeting. He should also have adequate spare parts readily available in case of failure, should periodically check audibility levels and should switch speakers' microphones on and off as needed, (the interpreters are only responsible for the switching on and off of their own microphones). There must never be more than one microphone on at the same time in the conference room; otherwise there is both a reduction in sound intensity and a disturbing increase in background interference.

4.14 Interpretation booths must have:

- a) sufficient visibility of speakers, slides, blackboards, etc.
- b) sufficient space for at least two people in reasonable comfort, remembering the booths are intended for long periods

of use by people whose work is strenuous and tense;

c) adequate ventilation (a fan is seldom noiseless, and only moves the air around without actually ventilating);

d) adequate sound-proofing (unfortunately difficult to achieve in portable booths). It is extremely tiring for the interpreter to have to speak in an unnaturally low voice for long periods, and this is also very monotonous for the listener;

e) easy access to the booths, so as to enable interpreters to relieve each other without difficulty; access should preferably be independent so that interpreters do not have to go through conference room.

Within the booth, there should be individual volume controls for each interpreter's earphones; individual microphones with on-off switches; adequate light, controlled independently of room lights; sufficient table- and shelf-space for papers and notes; available water, glasses, paper and pencils.

4.15 A reputable equipment company will be thoroughly familiar with these arrangements; but they should preferably be double-checked by the conference organizers and the chief-interpreter. Co-ordination is thus advisable between them before the meeting.

Forewarned conference organizers
and participants

IV.C

4.16 Even with top-rated interpreters and equipment, things can still go wrong because of inadequately-briefed participants:

a) as has been stressed above and throughout this paper, conference organizers should have sufficient understanding of the workings and implications of the system, and should consult experienced interpreters sufficiently well ahead of time, to be able to take full advantage of the services needed by the particular meeting or conference.

b) there are always, at the start of any meeting, likely to be a few persons unfamiliar with the system or unaware of it; it is therefore wise to have the chairman or one of the interpreters explain how it works. At round-table meetings, especially, participants should be reminded not to forget to speak into a microphone, to wait a second before starting to speak so that the technician has time to switch on their mike, not to put their earphones close to a live mike (or feed-back may startle the meeting) and to handle live mikes gingerly: a tap with a pipe or a cough is a head-splitting noise to the interpreters, who generally need to have their volume turned way up.

c) since a meeting with interpretation requires a slightly higher degree of discipline than one without it, chairmen should be briefed ahead of time about practical points to watch.

4.17 More details are available on this in AIIC's "Memorandum for Conference Organizers". An adapted version of it, specifically geared to Canadian conditions, might usefully be worked out.

4.18 Finally, one occasionally comes across a speaker who fails to speak clearly or intelligibly enough to do justice to himself, his interpreters, or his audience. Very little can unfortunately be done to remedy this -- apart from applying the precautionary measures against rapid reading of written texts -- mentioned in paragraph 4.6. (See also Appendix VII-4).

Appendix IV-1.

In his report to AIIC's 1963 Assembly, its then President, Constantin Andronikof, neatly summed up the various requirements mentioned in Part IV:

" Malgré tout ce que nous en disons, la profession reste mal connue, peu comprise, insuffisamment appréciée. D'abord, parce qu'elle est trop souvent mal exercée. Ensuite, parce que les délégués et les organisateurs ne parlent ni n'organisent pas toujours bien.

L'incompétence fréquente des interprètes ne doit pas nous faire négliger celle, non moins fréquente, de ceux-là. La qualité de la prestation dépend de ces deux facteurs, encore qu'à des degrés divers. Il appartient à L'A.I.I.C. d'éduquer le monde des conférences, y compris certaines organisations intergouvernementales, dans l'intérêt de la profession autant que dans celui de la coopération internationale, que l'article premier de nos Statuts nous impose de servir. Nos mémentos, nos règles techniques y visent. Le Code, qui nous lie, est net à cet égard.

Mais il nous faut d'abord nous éduquer ou nous ré-éduquer nous-mêmes. Il nous faut exercer notre métier avec rigueur, nous interdire toute complaisance, tout à-peu-près.

En outre, pour assumer à bon escient notre rôle, qui après tout, est public par définition, il convient de ne plus raser les murs et de sortir de l'anonymat auquel nous condamne la réclusion des cabines aux verres fumés, situées à une altitude abstraite, dont sortent souvent des voix impersonnelles, ânonnantes et désincarnées. On ne défend bien la qualité que lorsque l'on se sait en cause. "

PART V

HOW THE INTERPRETING PROFESSION
DEVELOPED AND HOW IT IS ORGANIZED

5.1 Interpreters have, in unguarded moments, been known to claim that theirs is the second oldest profession in the world. But interpretation in its present form is barely more venerable than the array of new specialties spawned by the cybernetics revolution. As a profession, interpretation is a descendant of the democratic process that led to popular franchise and to national self-determination; but it is also a sibling of the technical revolution that has, practically before our eyes, shrunk the world and made instant communication both possible and pressing.

5.2 Ever since semantic confusion presumably first developed around the Tower of Babel, interpreters of sorts, haphazard travellers, soldiers, merchants and noblemen, were pressed into the service of kings and generals, or of missionaries and envoys who had to venture into foreign lands.

5.3 But from time to time throughout history, successive "civilized" worlds saw the flowering of a lingua franca that helped exchanges, consolidated power, increased wealth and promoted learning. After Greek and Phoenician, for instance, Latin knew two such periods of glory, while the latest full cycle could be seen in the use of French as the language of the courts and diplomacy in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Congress of Vienna, that

glamorous precursor of many a later international meeting, had a neat edge over our more sophisticated multi-national assemblies; it used French in all its proceedings. It is with the advent of popularly-elected statesmen such as Wilson and Lloyd-George, not educated from early childhood to shoulder their countries' international responsibilities, that language problems began to complicate the multiplying network of international relations.

5.4 The 1919 Versailles Conference marked the beginning of an era; a generation of brilliant consecutive interpreters developed, and performed in an aura of glory in the League of Nations. *

5.5 After the Second World War, the Nuremberg Trials launched another epoch; that of simultaneous interpretation, which has not ceased gaining momentum since then. A series of factors made the moment ripe for innovation. Harried lawyers were searching for ways to lighten the burden of the trial's harrowing

* This is a rather cavalier way of writing off a fairly unusual page of history; there is, however, a good deal of literature on the subject, see e.g. Harold Nicholson "Diplomacy" Chapter X.

multilingual procedure; American technical inventiveness was tickled by a primitive, trumpet-like system already used by the ILO before the war for whispered-simultaneous interpretation; and eventually a Canadian ex-RAF bomber-pilot, who was an audio-engineer and happened to be working on radar research in England, was drawn into designing an abstruse system of cable-connected microphones and ear-phones for the unprecedented and mystery-shrouded job. A scattering of pre-war old-guard interpreters and a chance array of likely polyglots were thrown into a series of glass-fronted booths to cope as best as they could with the first attempt at English-French-German-Russian simultaneous communication. Unbelievably, it worked.

5.6 The extent of the recent proliferation of multinational meetings is seldom realized. In 1858, two international conferences were held in Europe. In 1958, a count of official international meetings revealed that 1,452 such meetings had been held in: 26 European and North-American countries, 17 Latin-American countries, 20 African countries, and 18 Asian and South-Pacific countries*. Barely half a decade later, there are some 120 countries active in the international circuit; conferences held each year across the world

* Source: AIIC's "Plaque d'Orientation Professionnelle"

well exceed 2000 -- not counting the galloping number of informal meetings of which there is no single official record.

5.7 Small wonder, then, that there has been a steady pressure of demand for more and more conference interpreters. As late as in 1958 they were a small and select band of some 250 internationally recognized professional experts; by 1965 they number more than 500. In addition, there are probably twice as many practising interpreters throughout the world, who do not belong to the two international associations that set standards for the profession: the prestigious, world-wide Paris-based AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence); and TAALS (The American Association of Language Specialists), with headquarters in Washington.

5.8 Europe still has the largest concentration of interpreters in the world, as well as longest experience in the field; North America is a close second; but interpretation is also taking root in other parts of the world. Latin America is in close touch with Europe and North America. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, with its satellites (Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc.) is a world apart, but is trying-out interesting new approaches to interpreter selection and training. Interpretation is also making headway in Asian countries such as India, Japan and mainland China. The Parliaments

of Ceylon and Singapore introduced interpretation before ours did in Ottawa*. Big conference centers are developing in cities such as Tokyo and New Delhi; despite the distances involved, interpreters there still tend to be recruited from Europe and North America, but teams of local interpreters will no doubt eventually become established on the spot. The many meetings in Africa and the Middle-East still largely draw upon the European pool for their interpretation requirements.

5.9 All along, since 1951 when the idea of a professional association was first launched, AIIC has been the pace-setter of the profession. It has promoted exacting standards of professional quality, so that belonging to the Association is a hallmark of recognition and standing, and gives an interpreter the chance to work anywhere he chooses in the world.

5.10 AIIC is not a federation; it is an association of individual members, who set their policies at annual Assemblies, and elect a Council and an Executive Secretary to carry on their business in the interim. It has elaborated a Professional Code and a Code of Ethics, (appended) which members bind themselves to follow; it sets minimum working conditions and fees; publishes annual directories listing members' names, addresses and language qualifications -- and elaborates studies on

*See Appendix VII-4

subjects important to the profession, including statistical data and market trends, evaluation of training methods and standards in Schools of Interpretation, rules for entry into the profession, standards of quality including criteria for language classification; questions of work-load; fair treatment of members, including non-discrimination; matters of health and social security, etc.

5.11 AIIC thus not only safeguards the interests of its members but also (in accordance with Article I of its Constitution) provides conference interpreting with an international frame of reference, and assists international co-operation through guaranteeing AIIC interpreters' professional qualifications.

5.12 TAALS (The American Association of Language Specialists) is more of a regional than a world-wide organization, and as such is particularly concerned with North-American working conditions; but it works in the closest of co-operation with AIIC.

5.13 Besides the AIIC and TAALS Code of Professional Conduct, also appended to this paper are the customary model letters of appointment used in Canada for free-lance conferences. AIIC publications available upon request include: a pamphlet offering professional guidance for would-be interpreters ("L'Interprète de Conférence: Son Rôle - Sa Formation"); a series of reports and

resolutions dealing with Schools of Interpretation; a "Memorandum for Conference Organizers"; a study on the problems of language classification (DA/9/08); a study on occupational health in the profession; reports on developments in the profession and on market requirements and trends; and a number of other informative background papers. Also available are the latest AIIC and TAALS Yearbooks, giving alphabetical and geographical listings of members.

5.14 For professional purposes, North America is generally regarded as a single entity; but in fact it consists of three main conference centres each with its own concentration of interpreters and its own characteristics. The largest is the New York/Washington area, with about 100 professional interpreters, including the large permanent United-Nations and State-Department nuclei and a sizeable number of free-lancers. Next comes Montreal, with over 20 professional interpreters (most on the permanent staff of ICAO, with only about half-a-dozen full free-lances in 1965. Also, there are the 11 parliamentary interpreters in near-by Ottawa). Mexico City has the next largest concentration of interpreters; the precise number (apart from six AIIC members) is rather difficult to determine, as conditions seem to be fairly fluid, with largely unpredictable quality and performance.

5.15 Beyond serving as a centre for international conferences, (see 3.6.1 above), Canada also has developed, largely owing to the Quebec risorgimento, a sizeable intra-Canadian market for free-lance interpreting. Its special characteristics are described in Part VI. As regards organization, there is no separate Canadian interpreters' association, since AIIC and TAALS satisfactorily meet current professional needs. The Montreal interpreters, both free-lance and permanent, are in close touch with each other, and even the several non-members have found it in their interest to co-operate in uniformly applying AIIC and TAALS regulations. Informal meetings are occasionally held to settle specific local problems. A "Société Canadienne des Traducteurs et Interprètes" (STIC) does, it is true, exist; but it in fact predominantly groups translators, with only a few of the Ottawa interpreters belonging to its Ontario branch. (ATIO). ATIO has set up a committee to study interpretation conditions in Canada; and the Committee seems to be thinking in terms of some separate Canadian interpreters' association, since past experience in both Canada and elsewhere has consistently shown that translators and interpreters have very few practical professional interests in common. The Ottawa interpreters are experiencing some difficulty in joining either of the international professional organizations, since they do not have many opportunities to work at large-enough outside conferences, where they would

become sufficiently well-known by colleagues to acquire the necessary five sponsorships. This, however, is largely a matter of time; and one or two of the Ottawa interpreters will already be in a position to apply for AIIC membership by its next Assembly.

5.16 A useful role for the ATIO committee, mentioned above, might be the annual collection of statistics on work done by interpreters in Canada, so as to evaluate trends and gauge future requirements. Although data are collected by AIIC, they are world-wide and do not reflect the development of particular markets. Since Canada, as explained above, presents rather a special case, it would be quite enlightening, and not complicated, to gather information on, notably, geographical distribution of work, peak periods in the year, proportion of languages used, etc. This information would be of special significance in the future planning of interpreter-training programs.

PART VI

THE CANADIAN CONTEXT
SPECIFIC PROBLEMS IN THIS COUNTRY

1. TRAINING: The No. 1 problem
(it needs a chapter to itself)
2. STANDARDS OF QUALITY: audience
reactions
3. DIFFERENTIAL STANDARDS OF
QUALITY: the unbalance of English
and French
4. THE MIRAGE OF BIVALENCE
5. THE MOUNTAIN OF COST: the move
may be Mohammed's

NOTE: The information in this chapter comes from direct personal experience. It is axed on conditions in 1965; but goes back to the period, seven or eight years ago, when free-lance interpreting in Canada was an amateur undertaking. An interpreter working alone, in appalling conditions and for a pittance, was expected to produce minor miracles. Since then, the situation has improved. It is still far from perfect. This is an attempt to describe it the way one deals with a friend, where affection has withstood the test of time; with blunt and searching understanding.

6.1 Training - There is a shortage of conference interpreters in Canada. This is not a specifically Canadian problem, as good interpreters are everywhere in high demand and will probably continue to be scarce, even at best. Since Canada, however, is still lagging behind other countries in what is being done to remedy the shortage, the pressing question of training competent interpreters will be looked at in Part VII.

6.2 Appraisal of quality - audience reactions - As has been explained elsewhere, interpretation is still a relatively new tool in Canada, and people are not yet quite sure about how to use it. Many regard it with slightly dazed wonder, like a circus feat: the fact that they wouldn't attempt to do it themselves removes it from the range of their critical judgement. Others, in a better position to evaluate its quality, but who may have had an unfavourable experience or two, write it off as a valiant attempt of limited practical value, or as one of the more tedious ways of paying lip-service to Confederation. The point is that, even though novelty has been wearing off, and even though the quality has, by-and-large, been improving as interpreters acquire more experience and apply themselves to hiking up their own professional standards -- there is only now beginning to emerge the kind of critical response that

is essential to the provision of a satisfactory service. Several fairly regular users of interpretation: the CBC, the Royal Commission, Expo, and one or two medical associations have, over the past year or two, just begun to keep an eye cocked for interpretation that delivers the goods, as distinct from that which does not, and are taking a gingerly interest in learning the ropes: how to go about discovering and securing good interpreters and reliable equipment. But the great majority still look upon it as a gift of the gods, to be taken unquestioningly, with faith, hope and charity.

The reaction of Canadians offers quite a contrast to that of Europeans who have no compunction about bestowing praise or criticism where it is due (when they are the listeners); and about listening to see whether the interpretation is doing its job, even if they don't need it (when they hold the purse-strings).

This difference may, in part, be due to a psychological factor. The Frenchman generally regards it as a feather in his cap to know no language other than that of Racine, Sartre et al. The Englishman or Italian has no deep-seated guilt feelings about not understanding Spanish or German. On the other hand, in Canada these days people (i.e. the non-French-speaking majority, to be more precise) feel unhappy, a little ashamed about not being "bilingual". They hate to be seen at a meeting wearing

ear-phones. Even the little white button-and-cord is a public admission of incompetence, a symbol to be self-conscious about, like a dunce's cap. A person who doesn't need it tends to treat it with remote superiority, and wouldn't be caught dead with one of the things (even Gallic curiosity succumbs to Anglo-Saxon one-upmanship). A person who does need it will go to all kinds of lengths to convince himself he can really get by without the gadget. It therefore takes quite a conscious effort to overcome what is an often unconscious resistance; a reluctance that only disappears once a group of people have become confident they are truly being helped to communicate better.

6.3 Differences between French and English speakers and audiences - There is also another inherently

Canadian difficulty that has made it more complicated for the uninitiated to evaluate interpretation. It is the differential make-up of both speakers and audience.

In the mid 1950-ies the problem arose in relatively simple terms. A few organizations were just beginning to explore the possibilities of a new device to improve their meetings. "International" labour unions realized that a good proportion of their Quebec members did not understand the speeches that labour leaders from outside Quebec came to deliver at Quebec meetings; several associations of medical specialists launched

an effort to attract more French-Canadian doctors into their ranks; a few companies discovered they made better sales in Quebec when they pepped-up their distributors in French; and they all turned to a wonderful new gadget just appearing on the market, whereby everybody at the big conventions might be made happy. Everyone could of course just go on speaking English as always; but even the little guys from Rimouski and Trois Pistoles would be given a chance to follow.

Then, what with one thing and another in the Province, a curious new trend began to develop. More and more of the educated French Canadians, the ones who make speeches at meetings and who, as everybody knows, speak perfectly good English, started choosing to speak in French. As late as 1958 or even 1960, I fail to remember any instance of a French Canadian addressing his substantive remarks to an English-Canadian or a mixed audience in anything but English. The last instance I recall of an active effort to discourage French Canadians from addressing a Toronto audience in French (even though simultaneous interpretation was actually there for the using!) was at a meeting of the Canadian Association of Mayors and Municipalities in 1962.

✓ A striking picture of the extent of change takes me back to the first labour meeting I ever attended, some seven years ago. It was a Quebec-Federation-of-Labour

educational seminar for union organizers, a week-end meeting held in the Laurentians. French was practically only spoken outside the conference hall. All the talks were given by English-speaking officers or guest-speakers, often from outside Quebec. A quarter or less of the French-Canadian audience of 30 to 50 "syndicalistes" listened through the interpretation (whenever the primitive, home-made system the FTQ then used didn't break down). Today, in May '65 I am writing these lines in the Laurentians, again at a union seminar where I see many of the same faces around me. The meeting is bigger, the equipment is better, the direct, sturdy, human companionship is the same; but practically everything happens to be going on in French. In a group of 100-odd, perhaps four or five follow the proceedings through interpretation, and speak English when they have comments to make. The change happened imperceptibly; this is not a conscious, deliberate nationalist choice. These people's main concerns are practical, economic, not intellectual; nor are they trying "to ride the wave". The air they breathe is quite simply different; and they're responding to a strong and genuine new need within themselves that just wasn't felt seven years ago.

The new trend has had a curious effect on simultaneous interpretation from and into Canada's two official languages. When an English speaker addresses an audience of Canadians some of whom do not understand English,

the chances are he is helpless at best, and indifferent at worst. He has to rely on the interpretation. If it is good, so much the better. If it is bad, he has no way of knowing; and besides, it doesn't matter too much. The Rimouski boys aren't likely to notice, and even if they do, they aren't too likely to complain.

Now something quite different happens when a French speaker addresses a mixed audience. The chances are he will soon find out if his English audience hasn't understood him. All his opposite numbers, the big shots, the ministers, the company presidents, are very much in the picture. And most of the time he isn't in the least helpless: he can say, to hell with the interpreters! and turn around and explain whatever the French failed to convey, in thoroughly competent English.

The point still often overlooked, however, is the extent to which it is unfair to expect a speaker to impress an audience in quite the same way, when he is forced to use a language other than his own (however well he may know it), as he would have done if using his own language. Ease, fluency, fire, brilliance, anger, wit, irony, competence are all impeded by a tinge of accent or even a tiny effort at finding the right words; and if the foreign accent or syntax are marked, if the speech is laboured, the image of the speaker in the audience's eye may be quite distorted -- quaintness may

overshadow even outstanding eloquence or cultivation or conviction.

This is perhaps yet another one of the many factors that have over the years, in English-Canadian minds, reinforced the myth of the alleged singularity of the French-Canadian educational system.

The interpreter's role, then is to convey not only the speaker's meaning, but also his tone and personality to the audience. They must sense the message as if they were getting it directly from the speaker. This, of course, presupposes great receptiveness of mind in the interpreter and qualities of speech not too far removed from those of the speaker. The touchstone will be this: did the interpretation manage to do better justice (in English ears) to, say, René Lévesque than he would have done himself had he spoken English rather than French? This is no mean criterion to have to measure up to; but anything less surely misses the point.

Since 1960, there has been a marked trend in Quebec to use French increasingly in public; and the gap between English and French audiences has been evening out, so that working meetings in particular, e.g. the labour unions and the scientific societies, have tended to rely more and more on competent interpretation from and into the two languages. In the other Provinces, however, into

which interpretation is now more frequently spreading, the situation tends to be similar to what it was several years ago in Quebec. The bulk of interpretation is into French, with quality fairly low on the priority list; while whatever little interpretation there is into English may only at the risk of its own neck fall far short of perfection.

For instance, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons is a national body that has not been providing interpretation at its meetings outside Quebec; but decided to do so at its annual three-day meeting in Toronto, early this year. However, of the 40-odd scientific papers, all but three or four were delivered in English. The French interpreters (good ones) were overworked, discouraged because no one was listening, and even if one or two people in the huge audience did depend on the interpretation, it never occurred to them to come up to the booth and say so, i.e. establish contact with the interpreters (who don't particularly enjoy working just to keep the air moving). As a result, the French interpretation tended to fall below par, a good deal of the time; and I can well imagine a French-speaking doctor picking up some ear-phones, shortly before his turn to deliver a paper, just to see whether the interpretation was any good; failing to appreciate the rendering of the scientific information being conveyed at that particular point; and proceeding thereupon to deliver his paper -- in English. Then when the time came

for the odd French paper to be delivered, probably three-quarters of the audience didn't even have ear-phones to listen, so the fact that the interpretation happened to be competent was largely academic, and must have left the speakers as frustrated as the interpreters.

To some extent the Commission doubtless saw this process happening at its hearings in the West -- although it must have been less marked because of the direct, immediate, inter-personal kind of communication characteristic of the Commission's meetings.

A special kind of experience often tops off the kind of meeting I have described. The interpreters are silently chewing themselves up for having done a miserable job. Unfailingly, at that moment, some well-meaning, innocent soul rushes up. Dazzled by the long, steady flow of foreign sounds, he cannot restrain his admiration: I just don't know how you do it!

On the strength of precisely such encouragement a good many beginning interpreters, their flagging spirits revived, fiercely determine to cling to a profession for which they are signally unsuited.

The remedy, of course, is to be rigorous in assessing the need for interpretation; where there is no need, it is likely to be bad and therefore worse

than useless; and secondly, to make sure that all the conditions are fulfilled (Part IV) that will enable it to do the job of communication expected of it.

6.4 Bivalence

Another result of the relative Canadian inexperience with the tool, and the lack of critical assessment of its performance, is the common assumption that an interpreter is like a tape recorder: you feed something in, press the right buttons, and out come the sounds in English, French, or whatever language may be needed. Actually, computers are now being developed that will, hopefully, some day manage to do this job -- but, for the time being, we have to depend on the transistors and electronic circuits in the human brain, which as yet just does not lend itself to this kind of programming. As explained in Part IV, interpreters work with active and passive languages according to a stringent language classification; and even of those who work with just two, (and the two best-known throughout the world, English and French), few if any have an identical level of proficiency in both. This is not a constant pattern, imprinted upon the brain for all time, but depends to a great deal upon environment, use, and even immediate circumstances. Proficiency in both active and passive languages is improved through use; but the degree of proficiency interpreters need in their active

languages is a delicate thing, easily affected through misuse. Quality is lowered both by switching constantly between two "active" languages, e.g. working intermittently into both English and French during the same meeting; and, to a lesser extent, by turning to the second active language after a long stretch with the first. Also, the relatively weaker of the two active languages (in North-America almost inevitably French) is more adversely affected by such periods of "disuse" than the stronger. In volume alone, there is much less authentic French than authentic English around one to draw upon and "live" from -- in every field, from road signs and mass media to scientific papers at learned-society meetings.

In other words, interpreters into French have, within the North-American context, a harder time of keeping up their standards of quality than their English-speaking counterparts; they have to be far more intransigent about not allowing their French to be contaminated by the surrounding sea of Englishness; and their French-Canadian audiences do not as a rule spur them on by being discriminating, i.e. both demanding and appreciative.

In fact, this is yet another instance of the common belief in Canada that anyone "bilingual" operates both ways with equal ease and at all levels of complexity. Current conversational "bilingualism" is used to judge working standards of proficiency. Every other day or so, the Montreal

Gazette blithely carries ads for Girl-Fridays who will translate publicity material as well as more abstruse texts "from English into French and French into English" for such unsuspecting employers as e.g. manufacturers of pharmaceutical products. Perhaps if one of the languages involved were more ^{exotic} eclectic (if it were, e.g. Japanese or Urdu) bivalence would less happily be taken for granted. Awareness of this quite widespread problem is reflected in a couple of briefs submitted to the Commission:

It is the policy of the University of Toronto Press to arrange, as far as possible, that all essential translations be made by Canadians whose mother tongue is the target language. The literary quality of any translation is, of course, of great importance to a university press, which must be vividly aware that the ability to speak a language fluently is not necessarily accompanied by the skill to write it elegantly and clearly. We believe that if this self-evident fact were remembered more frequently when the necessity to translate arises, much annoyance and even incomprehension would be avoided. (Para. 8 of the brief submitted by the University of Toronto Press)

Needless to say, this applies, a fortiori, to interpretation.

The Canadian Book Publishers' Council similarly stresses (Para. 6 of its brief):

/.../ translations should always be undertaken by experts whose mother-tongue is the target language. In our experience, exceptions to this rule are so rare that departures from it should be strongly discouraged in principle.

("Mother language" should probably in our context be understood to mean the language of higher education and of work.)

There is great need, therefore, in Canada, for a better understanding and greater respect of the difference between, in particular, an interpreter's active and passive languages. But even at best, assuming utopian comprehension, a practical problem remains: it is in practice extremely difficult to foresee accurately and unfailingly the actual proportion of English and French that will be spoken at a meeting. It may therefore occasionally happen that an interpreter has to help out an over-worked colleague, and pinch-hit into a less-than-active language. Since this is a strenuous -- and indeed generous -- thing to do, the interpreter tends to pat himself on the back and regard his work as a splendid accomplishment -- rather than recognize it for what it really is, a compromise, a lesser evil, acceptable only where its relative advantages clearly outweigh its inherent risks. The Canadian approach towards bilingualism breeds complacency about language ability. All too often, an interpreter is drawn into easy versatility instead of cultivating one-way excellence. Indeed, he often manages to do a creditable job -- as long as he is dealing with commonplaces. But if something more demanding comes up, difficult working conditions, or a finely reasoned argument, the rare speaker who manages to combine wit and elegance, or has a rapid-fire delivery, or uses the thin edge of irony -- and the interpreter is left floundering far behind, unable to relay both the sense and the form. Future interpreters' schools in this country, will need to pay very special attention to this problem.

6.5 Cost

Here again, Canada is not unique in facing the problem of the inherently high cost of simultaneous interpretation. However (as compared to big international meetings, where interpretation is but a fraction of the total costs incurred, and is often part of the largesse extended by the host country to foreign visitors) in Canada, interpretation often represents the largest slice in the organizing expenses of national meetings, and is a servitude imposed by the bilingual character of the country.

It happens, therefore, that Canadian meetings find interpretation to be a luxury beyond their means. They occasionally try to cut costs by turning to bilingual students or employees, or even to such institutions as the Berlitz language schools (which, ironically, are not only inexperienced in this field, but also charge higher fees and are therefore only called upon to "help out" when professional interpreters are in short supply). But in every such instance I have heard of, the interpretation has, predictably, fallen short of usefulness. This is not very serious in the case of meetings that only require interpretation as window-dressing, a symbolic gesture towards French-Canadian members who don't need it anyway (even though such conscience-money, hardly trifling even at cut-rate prices, could have been used more constructively elsewhere). It is sadder in the case of meetings where interpretation is really needed. Cheaper, sub-standard inter-

pretation is no solution, however hard-up an organization may genuinely be. Sometimes interpreters feel sufficiently at one with a cause to donate their services free (e.g. to the Canadian Cancer Society, to the Voice of Women, etc.), but these are not unnaturally isolated instances. Parliamentary interpreters are also, on occasion, loaned free-of-charge to government-sponsored meetings. But in a constitutionally bilingual country, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the government should bear some responsibility for providing interpreters, and possibly equipment, to national organizations that genuinely need the service but cannot get it for themselves (either because they cannot afford it, or because the demand exceeds the supply). This, of course, is no simple panacea. Defining the objects and the forms of government assistance would involve thorny problems - including the not-insignificant one of training good interpreters, dealt with in Part VII.

A very relevant point was raised at the Commission's Toronto hearings, on March 31, 1965. One of the Commissioners (Mr. Frith) asked the Canadian Book Publishers' Council (cf para 5 of their brief)* about the possibility of reducing the cost of translation through, in the future, training a larger number of talented translators. As explained in the reply, the problem lies not so much in a shortage of talented translators, as in a shortage of competent people willing to undertake the work, even at the apparently "high" rates

* quoted on page 66 below

offered. There is no point in trying to lower rates to levels paid for clerical work. This answer also applies to interpreters: while the laws of supply and demand do have some relevance, the question basically is that of paying enough -- i.e. enough to attract or induce people of the right calibre to do this job, people who by definition are also in high demand in other fields and professions. The emphasis here, as in doubtless many other areas, must be not just on training translators and interpreters, as on educating a great many well-rounded bilingual people. This, of course, touches on the broad issue of education throughout the country -- which is well outside the scope of this paper; but, for whatever it may be worth, this limited practical evidence is adduced in support of sound education, including a working knowledge of more modern languages than one, geared to the growing demands and inter-relationships of today's world.

If enough well-educated bilingual people are produced in Canada (bilingual again in the sense of McGill's definition -- para. 1.3 above) not only will there be less demand for translation and interpretation (which are crutches at best) -- but there will be a larger pool of talented people to draw upon -- among writers, lawyers, journalists, researchers -- for whom translation or interpretation might be a meaningful side-line or even an open door, providing a wide range of useful initial experience apt to enrich many a career.

6.6

Parliamentary Interpretation --
(a hesitant gloss) --

As suggested in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.4 above, a separate study should be made of the experience acquired since the setting up of a parliamentary interpretation service in 1958.

I have occasionally had an opportunity to work with Ottawa colleagues; and have talked over their problems with them a good deal. The comments that follow are based on this fairly cursory knowledge.

While there are three or four excellent interpreters in the Service, it does not appear on the whole to measure up to international standards of competence. Its weakest points seem to stem from its isolation and inadequate acquaintance with the methods, techniques and improvements worked out in comparable circumstances elsewhere; a trying technical set-up; and an administrative caste system. Interpreters serve under the direct authority of translators, long-established in the civil service, who no doubt mean well but have no experience and only a limited knowledge of the material and physical conditions and personal qualifications necessary for the proper exercise of the newer profession; and therefore tend to lay down rigid standards and work rules that often either fall short of, or exceed, the more flexible and esoteric requirements of interpretation.

An apt note on which to close this chapter may be a quotation from Maclean's (April 17, 1965) where June Callwood (in an article on the Parliamentary press gallery) speaks of

"... the current Canadian mood for critical self-examination, a testy nagging for universal excellence that takes the form of dissatisfied analysis of all institutions, both sacred and profane, and often blindly overlooks the emergence of worth in its attentiveness to the diminishing supply of num-skulls" ...

Ref. page 64 above: Extract from brief submitted by the Canadian Book Publishers' Council.

Para. 5 " /.../ The rate of payment for translating will vary substantially according to the literary responsibility and competence of the translator, as well as according to the nature of the assignment. Two or three cents per word will often be sufficient to secure a "rendering" of a book-length manuscript in the other language (an estimated figure, which includes the costs of typing services usually embodied in a typewritten translation). However, a translation which preserves and reflects true literary style requires qualities in the translator parallel with, if not equal to, those in the original author; such services will require remuneration at an appropriately higher rate. Even where this is set as high as four or five cents a word, a moment's reflection on what this represents in payment per page related to time required per page will make such a calculation appear quite reasonable. That is to say, fifteen to twenty dollars a page for translating, checking, revising, and typing a difficult text in political theory is a modest charge; if the book runs to 500 pages, however, it represents as much as \$10,000! "

TRAINING

7.1 Conference interpreting requires certain inherent aptitudes: intelligence, quickness of mind, adaptability, empathy, a feeling for words, linguistic ability, clarity of expression and a good dose of physical health and mental resilience. It also requires a number of acquired characteristics: a knowledge of languages, a well-trained mind, a broad store of knowledge, and a certain amount of experience and maturity. Finally, a good interpreter needs training and practice in the skill of interpreting itself.

7.2 There are many short-cuts, tricks-of-the-trade, tried-and-true methods that must become automatic. Only when they are as second-nature as a conditioned reflex, will they give time and lee-way for the more difficult manoeuvring required by the original thought, the unexpected phrase, or the unaccustomed word. There are also countless routine pitfalls the interpreter must learn to avoid. Strangely enough, a great many of today's best interpreters received no formal training; they had to find out all the hows and whys for themselves. They are mostly people who happened to have the right combination of talents, were more or less accidentally drawn into the profession and gradually sharpened their skills as they went along. Working at the side of a good, experienced interpreter is still one of the best ways of learning; and indeed this is a profession where the learning process never stops. Even old hands get something

new out of every new conference -- perhaps no longer just improvements in working techniques, but rather an unceasing broadening of their knowledge of the world and of the people around them.

7.3 Today, a new generation of bright young interpreters is, in Europe, more and more coming into the picture. A growing proportion of new entrants into the profession is no longer, as in the past, self-made, but has graduated from schools of interpretation -- where experienced interpreters have helped to steer them along the right lines. In e.g. the Sorbonne's Ecole Supérieure d'Interprétation, a faculty of experienced practising interpreters helps today's students off to a wonderfully promising start by passing on to them the knowledge and experience it has taken years of practical work to acquire. This is done by carefully selecting those students who will have a chance to make the grade; giving them the necessary know-how and practical training; and helping them to avoid painful mistakes or unfortunate working habits; and, once they have qualified, by sponsoring them professionally within the conference circuit. Nothing comparable is as yet happening in America.

7.4 A special feature of this profession is that, during an actual meeting, no special allowances can be made for a "beginner"; it is sink-or-swim from the very first, and the neophyte interpreter has to be good enough

to be a member of the team he is working with. Hence the usefulness of training; and above all the special importance of "simulated" practice; as well as, naturally, discrimination in grading the difficulty of the actual in-service experience a beginner can be given at first.

AIIC writes in its pamphlet on vocational guidance for would-be interpreters:

Mais le débutant devra se rappeler que le métier n'est pas moins exigeant pour lui que pour l'interprète aguerri. En effet, dès les premières séances, l'interprète doit faire la preuve de sa maîtrise, aptitude rarement exigée dès les premiers pas dans d'autres professions. Il est jugé chaque fois par un auditoire auquel il doit rendre pleinement le service pour lequel on fait appel à lui. Le débutant devra donc éviter de vouloir se "lancer" à l'occasion de conférences trop difficiles pour lui.

7.5 The picture of interpreter-training in Europe would, however, be incomplete without mentioning that, every year, some 20,000 (twenty-thousand) students are admitted into a vast number of more or less reputable "schools of translation and interpretation". Perhaps 100 (one hundred) of these ever get interpreters' "diplomas"; and some twenty of them will eventually become practising interpreters. This staggeringly low "survival" rate (which is not, of course, the same for all schools) has been one of the objects of AIIC's concern and study over some years. A series of factors has been diagnosed at the root of this obviously unhealthy situation; AIIC has sought to promote solid educational standards and conditions in schools of interpreting; and has

* In North America the University of Montreal provides some interpreter training. The only other "Interpreters' School" is at Georgetown University, Washington; though New York University is reportedly planning to open a school shortly.

lately "recognized" four schools that meet its criteria and train "viable" interpreters. They are:

- L'Ecole d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Commerciales de Paris,
- l'Ecole d'Interprètes de l'Université de Genève,
- l'Ecole Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs de l'Université de Paris,
- le Dolmetscher Institut de l'Université de Heidelberg.

Students graduating from these schools are considered capable of meeting professional requirements. Their names are circulated to all AIIC members who are asked to assist them in getting launched in the profession.

7.6 This does not in any way imply that other would-be interpreters (whether they have attended a school or not) are given less favourable treatment; but, in the absence of the reliable testing done by the AIIC-recognized schools, candidates must find other ways of proving their worth before they are likely to start getting work.

7.7 This raises the question of how interpreters are in fact recruited for free-lance assignments.

a) the "big employers", mainly the UN agencies and other international organizations, have their own personnel departments, familiar with the AIIC and TAALS Yearbooks that list professional interpreters alphabetically and geographically; and they also keep their own lists of free-lance interpreters they have found reliable and qualified. Because of the shortage of interpreters, they are very much on the look-out

for promising beginners, and in fact often give them a certain amount of training. In North-America, this is the main source of new recruits into the profession and indeed is a good way of getting started.

b) Otherwise, free-lance interpretation assignments are mainly a matter of contact between colleagues who are familiar with each others' qualifications, languages and specialties. A few interpreters go in for "organizing"; they seek out information on future meetings, write to them offering services and, if given the job of chief interpreter, recruit suitable teams. But (big international meetings apart) this is a tedious and relatively unpopular task; and in fact, most conferences turn to any of the competent interpreters they happen to know, and ask him in turn to get in touch with suitable colleagues (see Part III above). If a conference has had no previous experience of interpretation, and knows of no sister-organizations that have, it asks for the advice of e.g. the U.N. or the State Department (in Montreal ICAO and the University of Montreal are frequently called upon for such information) and are thus put in touch with interpreters, who take it from there. To get work, therefore, it is crucial for a beginning interpreter to become known by colleagues. Despite inevitable professional jealousies in a temperamental profession, true worth is still quite rare enough to be eagerly recognized. Flair, fine intentions or high ambitions alone, however, are like anywhere

else a poor substitute for competence.

7.8 One of the main reasons for the meager ratio of successes in schools of interpreting, is an inadequate selection of candidates. Few schools apply rigorous selection criteria and yet these are the only fair basis for offering applicants an honest course of interpreter-training. Indeed, one of the best ways of gauging the merits of a school is to compare admission figures with the number of practising interpreters produced. By that acid test, most "schools" rate a batting average of 1 out of every 200 students or so; the Sorbonne school, I understand, does considerably better, with a "success" ratio of 1 in 10 to 1 in 5 (I don't have comparable figures for the other AIIC-recognized schools, but have reason to believe they are no higher); while the London "Working Party", which is not even a school in the current sense, tops the list with a score of over 5 in 10 (see Appendix VII-2 for details on this noteworthy experiment of some years' standing by now).

7.9 Research is being conducted (notably in England and Yugoslavia) on the aptitudes and prior qualifications needed by a would-be interpreter before he starts training with reasonable chances of success. Pending more precise criteria, AIIC describes these aptitudes in its "guidance" material (see Appx VII-1 and also refer to Appx VII-2 & VII-3).

and is contemplating calling a meeting of its members involved in interpreter teaching and training, to promote an exchange of experiences on this and related topics, (para 7.16).

7.10 It is, increasingly, the consensus of all experienced teachers of interpretation, that interpreter training should be post-graduate in character, i.e. that applicants should have an MA degree or the equivalent, in economics, history, law, science, etc. (not necessarily, and not even preferably, in languages). However, it is also increasingly stressed that teaching languages should be quite distinct from training in interpretation. Teaching interpretation is a poor substitute for training the mind on "real" subject matter; and it is a costly and imperfect method of teaching languages. Ideally, short intensive interpretation courses should be offered to university-educated persons who already have a sufficient mastery of two or more languages, and seem to have the right aptitudes.

7.11 By the time a person looks for training to become an interpreter, it is at any rate too late to teach him his A language: he should have grown up in it and studied in it to have a chance of ever making the grade. B and C languages can still to some extent be acquired at this point, but instead of spending three or four years following language and other classes at an interpreters' school, an applicant would generally do better to go off for an intensive year's pure language study, preferably at a good university in the country whose

language he is studying. Canadians are relatively lucky to have both English- and French-language universities right in their own country; but they would nevertheless occasionally benefit from a thoughtfully-planned trip abroad to limber up their A language.

7.12 A future interpreter's languages must be geared to existing market needs: there are certain language combinations which, though interesting in themselves, will not in the foreseeable future make an interpreter earn his living. French-Italian-Spanish, for instance, may not get an interpreter a job in half-a-dozen years. To survive in the Canadian free-lance market, an interpreter must have an A in either English or French, and preferably at least a B in the other; and, preferably also, at least one B or C in Spanish, Russian, German or Portuguese (in decreasing order of practical importance). For the time being, at any rate, no other languages would be paying propositions in the North-American free-lance conference circuit (though e.g. the United Nations and the State Department employ Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and other interpreters on their permanent staffs). Schools of interpretation need to gear their training (and hence also their selection of applicants) to languages for which there will be an actual demand among employers (paradoxically, there is a relative world-wide shortage, of many years's standing, of English-A interpreters).

7.13 The question, of course then arises: But if so, what is the interpreters' school supposed to teach? Assuming the natural aptitudes are there, as well as the educated mind and the required language proficiency -- the school should concentrate on teaching the student how to use and to transpose his languages in the demanding tasks his work will require, and how to acquire and exercise the professional skills he must develop. It should also advise him about additional courses he may need to take in other faculties (e.g. courses on economics, political institutions, international law, history, or even scientific or technical subjects) to supplement his previous education. But in the interpreters' school, the emphasis should be on developing mental grasp and agility, on creating an awareness of the thought-processes involved in both direct oral communication, and communication across a "language barrier" -- rather than on mechanistic transposition and automatic vocabulary drills, which produce unintelligent and often unintelligible reproduction of the original message. That is why the good European schools devote a great deal of time and energy to teaching consecutive interpretation first of all (see paras 2.7-2.9 above). This trains the mind in grasping the message, and in conveying it faithfully and clearly -- as no amount of simultaneous can do. I was impressed, at the Sorbonne school, by the careful gradation of "consecutive" exercises in which the students' range of

comprehension and skill is slowly built up; and by the passage over to simultaneous, with careful coverage of the various mental processes and practical skills involved -- rather than the happy random hours of "booth practice" which are still the mainstay of the curriculum in far too many schools.

"Ce qu'il faut leur apprendre surtout (one of the professors told me, bolstering this up by a series of vivid examples) ce n'est pas comment rendre le terme, mais comment imaginer, vivre la situation." The results I had a chance to see were striking enough to make me wish I were back in school!

7.14 Apart from high admission standards, a factor in the success of the best schools is the close link they have with practising interpreters. Not only are they thoroughly familiar with the current demands of their work, but they have a feeling for how students respond to them, and can also bring their students into direct contact with the "real McCoy" by taking them to "live" conferences, and by training them on suitable, up-to-the-minute material which keeps students on their toes. This is the only way to produce graduate interpreters who can perform on a par with many an experienced "old hand".

7.15 It is not too long a process: depending on standards at admission, and the intensity of the course, a year down to as little as six months seems a reasonable average. The

experience of the London "Working Party" (Appendix VII-2) is of special interest in this connection.*

7.16 A need felt for some time by a number of interpreters' schools is about to be filled: to promote exchange of experiences and comparison of methods and results, a seminar is being prepared by AIIC, which will give professors of interpretation from the various schools a chance to meet, discuss their problems, and possibly reach practical conclusions. This should be watched closely from Canada, as it may be particularly useful to us.

7.17 Although interpretation is a profession that requires, from its entrants, a certain range of knowledge and maturity of mind, it is far from kind to the mature in years. Its physical and mental stresses are intense; they are only now beginning to be studied. It is also work which requires unusual alertness and stamina. A number of interpreters are coming to believe that their best years lie between the ages of approximately 25 and 45. This is therefore an excellent "gateway" profession, and may help give a headlong start to young reporters, writers, diplomats, lawyers, college teachers, scientists and artists. It combines quite well with certain other occupations, such as journalism, teaching, writing, translating -- and even housewifery (married women interpreters are, according to at least one study, among the allegedly "happiest" and "stablest" members of this motley crowd).

* See also an article by W. Keiser on "Tendances récentes dans la formation d'interprètes de conférence" in *L'Interprète*, (Genève), May 1964.

7.18 Interpreting is thus at times an absorbing, challenging and exhilarating avocation, at others a murderously inhuman serfdom, whose frustrations have to be worked off in other creative directions. It is still new enough to be blazing uncharted trails, and to provide a fertile field for further study and analysis. It still carries within itself unresolved paradoxes; evidence may be found in comparing for instance, a past President's suave: "notre métier... nous offre une diversité d'informations et une ampleur d'expériences humaines sans pareilles" with the less circumspect statements reported by Newsweek last March (Appendix VII-5) which led to a series of anguished yelps and a flurry of denials.

7.19 But, above the din and the music, it still remains true that interpretation is a tool of vast potential usefulness; and that, in a bilingual country such as this, wider familiarity with the prerequisites is necessary to bring the potential to fulfillment.

-End-

AIIC GUIDANCE MATERIAL FOR FUTURE INTERPRETERS

Extracts from "L'Interprète de Conférence: Son Rôle, Sa Formation",
published by AIIC in November 1964

..... Caractéristiques du Futur Interprète

Seuls ceux qui connaissent déjà à fond les langues qu'ils désirent pratiquer professionnellement peuvent envisager de devenir interprètes. La parfaite maîtrise d'une langue exige que l'on se soit pénétré des traditions du pays où elle est parlée, de son histoire et de sa littérature, de la façon de penser, de vivre et de réagir de ses habitants; style, rhétorique, humour, idiotismes, clichés, accent et argot courant ne doivent plus avoir de secret pour celui qui se destine à l'interprétation. Cette connaissance doit être profonde, c'est-à-dire celle du linguiste et non du polyglotte; aussi les interprètes de conférence utilisent-ils rarement plus de trois langues comme langues de travail.

Il est en outre indispensable que le futur interprète possède des notions suffisantes sur un certain nombre de sujets tels que l'histoire, la géographie, les sciences, l'économie politique, le droit, la procédure parlementaire, l'organisation de la vie internationale, etc... En effet, l'interprète doit être en mesure de suivre un débat sur n'importe quelle matière,* qui dit suivre ne dit pas nécessairement connaître, mais implique la faculté de s'adapter au sujet : l'interprétation exige, en effet, une très grande disponibilité d'esprit.

Capable d'analyser et de comprendre rapidement les idées de l'orateur, l'interprète doit aussi posséder la vivacité d'esprit et l'éloquence qui lui permettront de les transposer instantanément. Chacune de ces deux particularités est assez répandue, mais il est rare qu'elles soient réunies chez une même personne; c'est ce qui explique que le nombre des interprètes professionnels reste faible par rapport au nombre des linguistes.

* In all my experience I must, however, painfully admit to having a couple of times helplessly worked out of my depth: in several of the subjects dealt with at the International Congress of Sociology (Washington 1962), and in the higher mathematics that played a considerable part in the International Congress on Information Processing (New York 1965). T.N.

Interpréter suppose la maîtrise d'un vocabulaire étendu et très différent d'une conférence à l'autre. Si, pour certaines conférences, l'interprète doit apprendre une terminologie spéciale, ce qui nécessite un effort renouvelé de mémorisation, il lui arrive à tout moment d'avoir à rechercher un terme ou une expression au fond de sa mémoire, il doit donc disposer d'un "bagage" très complet.

Autant d'impératifs intellectuels, auxquels s'ajoutent des impératifs caractériels : solidité du système nerveux, faculté de se détendre; le métier comporte de longues périodes de concentration et de tension, et quelle que soit la durée de la séance, l'inattention est interdite à l'interprète. Il lui faut pouvoir ensuite récupérer, se remettre en disponibilité.*

Il devra également faire preuve, outre de la discrétion professionnelle de règle formelle et absolue, de discrétion vis à vis de ses collègues, de patience, de sens de la mesure, de sens d'équipe. S'il est probablement superflu de préciser que la conscience professionnelle de l'interprète lui enjoint d'observer une scrupuleuse fidélité et objectivité à l'égard de chaque orateur, il faut par contre rappeler qu'une certaine assurance est nécessaire. Il ne lui suffit pas d'être sûr de son interprétation, il doit également inspirer confiance : l'interprète est tenu d'observer une complète neutralité intellectuelle dans l'exercice de ses fonctions, mais il doit savoir persuader, autant que son modèle, mesurer ses gestes et sa voix, préciser sa diction, en un mot "passer la rampe".

F O R M A T I O N

Ces impératifs définis, reste à découvrir les personnes qui y répondent et à leur ouvrir les portes de la profession; mais il faut aussi, avant qu'ils ne soient trop engagés, ouvrir les yeux de ceux qui auraient des qualités autres que celles dont l'expérience révèle qu'elles sont indispensables à l'exercice satisfaisant de la profession. L'extension des besoins et le développement concomitant de la demande, ainsi que l'attrait qu'exerce aujourd'hui ce métier, ont tout naturellement posé la question du recrutement et, pour certains, de la formation complémentaire nécessaire.

* cf. very interesting report on occupational health hazards published by AIIC in 1963 (based on articles by W. Keiser and E. Meister in "L'Interprète", February 1963).

Le candidat interprète, qu'il vienne d'une autre profession ou qu'il soit étudiant, sera d'autant mieux armé pour aborder la carrière, qu'il aura reçu une formation universitaire ou exercé une profession qui lui auront appris à raisonner avec rigueur et l'auront ainsi préparé à comprendre la pensée d'autrui. En effet, les questions traitées dans bien des conférences - scientifiques, techniques, économiques ou autres - seront si diverses et si précises qu'il ne pourra se familiariser qu'avec la terminologie et des rudiments et qu'il lui faudra tabler sur sa capacité de suivre le raisonnement quel qu'il soit.

Un futur interprète a donc tout intérêt à suivre des études supérieures, universitaires, techniques, etc... Ce faisant, il s'ouvre également d'autres voies: il peut avoir à exercer un second métier, en particulier pendant la période creuse de ses débuts, ou encore il peut s'apercevoir que sa capacité de devenir interprète ne se confirme pas : on peut satisfaire aux épreuves d'aptitude permettant d'être admis aux cours d'interprétation, mais ce n'est, en effet, qu'en fin de formation technique d'interprète de conférence que s'avère si l'on est vraiment fait pour le métier.

Il est également fort utile, à l'élève comme à l'interprète formé, de connaître ou de pratiquer la profession-soeur du linguiste : la traduction. Il peut ainsi approfondir ses connaissances linguistiques, sémantiques et philologiques et affiner sa faculté d'analyser et de transmettre le discours.

Mais il doit savoir qu'on ne peut, sans rencontrer des difficultés considérables, pratiquer ces deux disciplines en alternance trop rapprochées, au cours d'une même conférence. Les démarches intellectuelles, le rythme de transposition, sont très différents, voire opposés.

DEBOUCHES

Le nombre de candidats attirés par la profession est très disproportionné par rapport aux débouchés qui s'offrent à eux.

La profession aura toujours besoin de nouveaux éléments, en raison du développement constant des relations internationales, mais il est certain que seuls les interprètes professionnels pleinement qualifiés réussiront à s'affirmer. Si la qualité moyenne s'abaissait, les organisateurs de conférences préféreraient probablement se passer d'interprétation, plutôt que de disposer de services médiocres, d'une utilité contestable lorsqu'ils ne sont pas néfastes.

Les conférences à trois langues étant aujourd'hui les plus fréquentes, il est sage pour le candidat de n'envisager la carrière que si la langue maternelle s'assortit de deux autres langues qu'il connaît à fond. En dehors du cas, fort rare, du bilingue, qui possède à un degré égal de perfection deux langues maternelles, dont il pourra user dans des conditions d'équivalence absolue, il n'y a pas de place sur le marché actuel pour un candidat qui ne connaîtrait qu'une seule langue outre la sienne propre.

En règle générale, les langues de travail des interprètes qui désirent exercer en Europe occidentale doivent comprendre l'anglais ou le français, ou mieux encore les deux; et sur le continent américain, l'anglais et l'espagnol. Certaines combinaisons linguistiques se trouvent rarement réunies chez un même interprète; si elles sont précieuses, elles ne sont cependant pas forcément suffisantes : ainsi la combinaison russo-espagnol (utile à l'ONU et dans les institutions spécialisées) n'est profitable que si elle est complétée par l'anglais ou le français; de même que la combinaison néerlandais-italien (utile dans les Communautés européennes) doit être complétée par une autre langue, par exemple le français. La connaissance de langues telles que l'arabe, le chinois ou le japonais présente un intérêt encore restreint, mais qui ne peut manquer de croître.

Les conférences techniques devenant de plus en plus nombreuses, une certaine compétence dans un sujet déterminé s'ajoute utilement aux connaissances linguistiques (médecine, physique, biologie, etc..).

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Le futur interprète se demandera probablement avec quelque ironie, après avoir lu ce qui précède, si ses aînés se targuent de posséder eux-mêmes le large éventail de qualités qu'on lui demande de posséder. Qu'il se rassure : la description de tant de caractéristiques si variées n'implique pas la perfection dans chacune d'entre elles; mais l'expérience enseigne qu'à des degrés divers, elles sont toutes nécessaires et que leur valeur vient précisément de leur conjonction.

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March 1965

THE TRAINING OF CONFERENCE INTERPRETERSThe Working Party Method

- 1) The Linguists' Club Working Party, which was started in 1938, is the oldest conference interpreters' training centre in Europe.
- 2) It is guided by an Advisory Committee consisting of professional conference interpreters, all members of AIIC* and LACI*, under the chairmanship of A.T. Pilley (who for the past twenty-five years has acted as consultant for the training and recruiting of interpreters for the Foreign Office and other Government Departments in the United Kingdom and abroad).
- 3) The Working Party carefully avoids the fault seemingly inherent in the teaching at most conventional interpreter's schools, i.e. the confusion between the teaching of languages and the teaching of the interpreting technique.
- 4) Since experience has shown that selection is at least as important as training, entry into the Working Party is governed by a rigorous Aptitude Test where capacity to interpret is carefully assessed by a jury of experienced conference interpreters. Only applicants who know two or more of the standard conference languages at the requisite standard are accepted.
- 5) Persons are admitted who in addition to their linguistic skill have an adequate background of general education, knowledge of world affairs and the necessary temperament. They are drawn from other professions, chiefly broadcasting, journalism, teaching, law and the international civil service, and their ages usually range from 25 to 45. Working Party members are not students in the ordinary sense of the term and they normally have other occupations; thus the Working Party holds its meetings in the evening. The course is restricted to six or eight persons at a time and lasts three months to one year.
- 6) Teachers at the Working Party are without exception themselves practising conference interpreters. They take great care to teach the actual know-how of interpreting, concentrating on practice rather than theory. Every meeting follows as closely as possible the pattern of an international conference or committee meeting.
- 7) Members of the Working Party are introduced to the rules and mores of the profession and are frequently given the opportunity to attend conferences and to work in 'dead' booths. At peak conference periods they are sometimes integrated in actual teams and asked to interpret 'live'.

* AIIC = Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence.
LACI = London Association of Conference Interpreters.

- 8) Over 90% of those admitted as full members of the Working Party make the grade and become conference interpreters. This compares with what is believed to be well below 5% at most of the conventional schools (i.e. 5% of the total at entry). This wide disparity is due to the difference of approach; those who register at the conventional interpreters' schools are at first not taught interpreting at all but only translating and background subjects; only a very small minority subsequently qualifies for training at the advanced interpreting classes or seminars. That minority includes many distinguished interpreters, but one wonders what has happened to the majority.
- 9) The Working Party is among the first few training centres which have supplied new entrants to the profession. It has since the war produced 31 members of AIIC and/or LACI. As may be seen from the AIIC Report on Schools, 1963, the Working Party's AIIC record compares favourably with that of the conventional schools. The figure of 31 must be seen in the context of what is almost certainly the smallest liberal profession in the world: at the time of writing there are less than forty qualified conference interpreters in the U.K. There are nine permanent posts for interpreters in the whole country; the majority of practising interpreters are free-lance.
- 10) The Working Party system in a more streamlined form has been applied by A.T. Pilley for the training of Parliamentary interpreters for the Ceylon House of Representatives (1955), the Singapore Legislative Assembly and the Malayan Parliament (1957). The same system has been commissioned for the Basutoland Parliament in 1965 and discussions are in progress for its introduction for the Parliaments of India, Northern Nigeria and Hong Kong in 1966/1967. (cf. White Paper No. L.A.20 of 1957 on Languages in the Singapore Legislative Assembly Debates).
- 11) In view of its restricted and highly specialized nature, a training group of the Working Party type cannot possibly be a viable proposition financially. It can only function if it is either a) subsidised or b) grafted on to an existing teaching establishment. In the case of the Working Party itself the cost is shared between its members and The Linguists' Club.
- 12) It is considered that one of the basic "vices" of the conventional school method is that the school, in order to pay its way, to meet the expenses of rent, teachers, secretariat and overheads, is compelled to admit scores - indeed hundreds - of students, many of whom are young and inexperienced and the vast majority of whom do not, in any case, possess the gifts and qualities which would enable them one day to become international conference interpreters.
- 13) It would appear that many establishments, instead of calling themselves "School of Translating and Interpreting" or even "School of Modern Languages" adopt as title the misnomer "Interpreters' School" for reasons of prestige, publicity or financial profit.
- 14) But it is satisfactory to note that at least one enlightened and progressive school in France has implemented the AIIC recommendation that mature persons of the right calibre be admitted to the advanced class or seminar without first spending one, two or three years in the preliminary classes. It is hoped that many more will follow that encouraging example.

(Signed)

A.T. Pilley, M.A. (Oxon) F.I.L. -
Officier d'Académie
Director of the Linguists' Club

APPENDIX VII - 3

Excerpts from letter addressed to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Singapore, by the Chief of the Interpretation Section, United Nations, dated: February 25, 1957

"... To take selection first, we have found that the candidate, besides having a thorough knowledge of at least three languages (one of which he must speak fluently, correctly and clearly) must be a person who either through a college education, or by some other means, has acquired a good general knowledge of the matters that he will be dealing with. Here at the United Nations, for instance, he must understand matters economic, political, diplomatic, legal, colonial, social, cultural and so on. It is not enough for him to know the languages; he must be sufficiently intelligent and educated to grasp and assimilate what delegates and experts of all kinds are talking about.

Even a candidate who has the basic linguistic and general knowledge may not make an interpreter. The only way to find whether he will is to try to train him, at least for a few weeks. A good candidate may learn to interpret in a few hours, or may take a few weeks at, say, four hours a day. If a candidate is not performing reasonably well, after about thirty hours training of this kind, he is unlikely ever to succeed. If he is, then it is just a matter of giving him practice, in whatever specialty field he is going to work so that he can develop self assurance, fluency and versatility.

As regards salaries, much depends on the nature of the subject-matter of the speeches and the status and requirements of the persons for whom the interpreter works. If the subject matter is complicated and the listeners are persons of some education and eminence, the interpreter will have to be a correspondingly educated person, who will command a fairly high salary. Our interpreters are fairly high up in the professional category, comparable in status and remuneration to economists, lawyers and so on in the substantive departments. ...

Finally, regarding conditions of work, it is difficult to be very specific as so much depends on local conditions and the number and nature of meetings to be served. But, in general, it may be said that an interpreter can be expected to interpret for about three quarters of a working week, say, seven or eight half-day meetings in a five-day working week, provided that the booth that he works in is properly lit and ventilated. Over a long period this may prove rather too much from the health point of view; ..."

Extracts from Records of the Legislative Assembly, Singapore.
Evidence given by T.A. Pilley on Establishing an
Interpretation Service

Source: Sessional Paper No LA 20 of 1957 - Report from the Select Committee on Languages in the Legislative Assembly Debates (pp. 77 sqq.)

Question (the Speaker):....Your first suggestion then is to try to get . . . a panel of free-lance workers. That is one suggestion. Is there an alternative? If it is not possible to find free-lancing interpreters in sufficient numbers what is the next solution? ... In Canada they have what they call a Bureau of Translation which is called upon to supply translators and interpreters whenever needed by a department ... Supposing this idea of a Bureau is developed, do you think that it could also be a source from which the Assembly can draw its interpreters?

Answer (T.A. Pilley): I am afraid my answer to that question is emphatically -- No. It is completely out of the question. I am sorry to be so brutally frank. The reason is that translating and interpreting are completely different disciplines. Very often a first class translator is no good at interpretation and vice versa. An interpreter who is a master of speech may not even be able to spell correctly; but quite apart from the basic background knowledge, if he has a quick wit and a dynamic personality he will not be the sort of man who will like sitting down and doing written translations.

Experience in England, France, Holland, Switzerland, Belgium has shown that translating and interpreting are two completely different jobs. Many of those who have tried to combine the two (and many have tried to do so) have come a cropper. In other words, the field is so restricted. Many people in England do not even realize what a conference interpreter is. They go to a translation bureau to look for one; the bureau sends someone, say an excellent French-English translator; he goes into the booth but he cannot even open his mouth, or he makes a terrible mess because the two jobs are completely different. A translator will sit down, write a sentence, feel doubtful about a word, cross it out -- he will always be seeking the most elegant word. The job of an interpreter is different -- it is to get the meaning across quickly; it may be that the word he has chosen to convey this meaning is not the best, but it may be exactly the word which will convey the meaning more quickly. He has to do this very quickly and has to have a very quick wit. Supposing the speaker coughs and the interpreter misses a vital word; he must be sufficiently quick-witted and honest to do one of two things -- either to guess the word and weave it in, or to say into the microphone, "I am very sorry, I have missed the last sentence but it was probably such and such". Now a translator cannot do that. He is much too plodding, he works in depth; while an interpreter works at speed. They are two completely different disciplines. In the United Nations none of the translators interpret and none of the interpreters translate...

Question (the Speaker): But do you not think that an interpreter can so adapt himself that he can sit in an office and do translation work?

A. (T.A. Pilley): Yes, it is more than likely that an interpreter can adapt himself to translate... but frankly I think you are on the wrong track. I think that your best chance of success is to look through a panel of university teachers, very bright third- or fourth-year undergraduates, lawyers and journalists, people active in these professions who have a lot of experience in public affairs and are accustomed to the problems discussed in the Parliament. In England, for example, one of the twenty interpreters is an authoress, two work full time for the British Broadcasting Corporation but take time off to do interpretation, and one is a barrister who occasionally likes to interpret for a conference. Those are the type of people you need, men of substance, not secretaries or even translators who may be good only at written work. The sort of men that you must look for are radio people, journalists, lawyers and teachers, not youngsters but men with poise and eloquence if you like, men of the parliamentary type. I said so to the Clerk of the House of Representatives in Colombo. He thought that I was exaggerating a bit. He advertised in the universities and other places and received some ninety applicants and reduced the list to thirty. He said to me "We have many tribunals and Courts and we have Tamil, Singhalese and English interpreters for the Courts". I told him that I thought it was most unlikely that a court interpreter would make a conference interpreter. He also said: "We have also translation bureaux and many translators" I said, "Try out the applicants, I do not think that it is impossible to get a good interpreter from among them but I would be surprised if you do" Well, in the event, not one court interpreter or translator survived the test. The four who did were two journalists, a teacher and a man from Radio Colombo, and the two who finally turned out to be the best, on a level in quality with UN interpreters, were the man from Radio Colombo (who is in news and radio broadcasting) and one of the journalists. The third successful candidate, very good and intelligent later became a Member of the New Ceylon Parliament. Those are the type of people who will make the grade (...) Human beings and social problems are the same the world over, so I see no reason why you can succeed in Singapore where they have failed in London and Geneva.

.....

Q. (the Speaker): I suppose arising out of that part of the training will be the compilation of what may be termed a Glossary of Technical Terms?

A. (T.A. Pilley): That curiously enough is only a minor problem. It is important but fortunately it is technically easy to solve. What they can do is work out a glossary of parliamentary terms with the help of the Clerk; they can do that within a few days. (...) It is very easy. Free-lance interpreters, for example, have to do a big variety of subjects, but they learn the different terminology easily. My own program has included conferences on navigation, with words like mobile cranes, hatch-ways, automatic elevators and fork-lift trucks. I have also covered conferences on rubber in Ceylon, the Wheat Council, Safety in mines for the Miners Federation, metal boxes, a big hospital Federation in Lisbon. The problem is one of detail and it is not very important - you merely have to spend a few hours or days getting familiar with the words. It is not the crux of the problem. A man with sufficient mental calibre can learn the words easily.

Q. (the Speaker): The point has been raised what is the remedy if a difficult speaker is not audible or speaks too fast?...

A. (T.A. Pilley): Yes. That is one of the more unfortunate problems of the profession (...). The only way to overcome it (and it is not a very satisfactory way) is to install a red light on the Speaker's table; an interpreter who is in trouble presses a switch, the red light is put on, the Speaker realizes the trouble and directs the speaker to speak into the mike. With a good chairman it may work but(...) in fact, we have almost given up the red-light system. What happens is this. The speaker on the rostrum is going too fast or is speaking away from the microphone; the interpreter presses the switch; the red light comes on but the speaker, thinking that the chairman is informing him that he has only one minute left, speaks faster still!

Q. (the Speaker): The red light is placed on the rostrum?

A. (T.A. Pilley): Yes. And if we put it near the chairman, he may put a book over it so he does not see it... But, of course, you must be prepared for this - even when you have first class interpreters (which is an absolutely open question) your proceedings will be spoiled to some extent by speakers who, although they may be professional and trained, may sometimes speak too quickly or are a bit confused; then the interpreter is lost and that in turn means that the assembly-men depending on him (...) will miss something. So you must not think that even with a perfect team you will get perfect interpreting service. (...) Even at the United Nations or at highest-level conferences, employing first class interpreters, things can and do go wrong.

.....

Extracts from a Paper by Pierre Daviault,
Superintendent, Bureau of Translations, Ottawa*

".... Translators... only arrive at a fair knowledge of both vocabularies, English and French, only after long comparisons of English and French books, journals and documents on that subject. It is a continuing process, because in such matters as we have already seen, there is always something new.

Of course, there is more than that to translation. For instance, the Oxford French-English dictionary has this to say: 'The value of a French translation lies in the similarity of its impact on the French mind with the impact of the original on the English mind. What is only intellectual, logical, not affective, has no momentum.'... As a famous philologist once said: 'A language, manifestly, is not merely a series of words. It is the overt embodiment of a system of ideas, a way of looking at things'."

*This short extract is appended here, because

- a) it was remarkable to find it in a report of the Singapore Legislature and
- b) it has as much relevance to interpretation as to translation.

APPENDIX VII-5

as U.S. ambassador to Paris Charles Bohlen and former ambassador to Moscow George Kennan.

Chances are, however, that most of the would-be simultaneous interpreters are doomed to disappointment. For they are striving to join a profession that can barely absorb 50 new people a year, that pays moderate salaries (an average of \$12,000 a year for top-rated "free lances"), and whose psychic rewards are arguable at best. In fact, reported *Newsweek's* Joel Blocker after looking in on a convention of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) in Paris last week, most of the world's leading simultaneous interpreters lead lives of quiet—and not too prestigious—desperation.

"It is a monstrous profession," says Alexandre Blokh, the elegantly handsome chief interpreter at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. "It's frustrating, humiliating, unnerving. The last thing in the world I'd want my son to be is an interpreter." Blokh, who is French-born, English-educated, and of Russian parentage, also writes novels and literary criticism under the pen name of Jean Blot.

Other AIIC'ers, perhaps without Blokh's creative outlet, are even more cynical. Interpreting is "pervse," con-

fided one stringy-haired Frenchwoman at the meeting last week. Her companion, a pretty, young German linguist in her 20s, added: "We drink too much—that is because we work under such strain. We're neurotic, so jumpy, always making scenes. Did you hear the story of the interpreter at the U.N. who hung himself in the interpreters' booth by the wires of his own headphone?"

Despite their self-deprecation, interpreters are among the most intelligent and responsible professionals in the world. "A good interpreter," says Danica Seleskovitch, a petite, gray-haired dynamo who heads an interpreters' school, "must be as intelligent, or at least as *au courant* with the subject under discussion, as the person he is interpreting for. The idea is not to translate literally, but to achieve the same impact as the speaker."

A Knack: In fact, as many of the interpreters are only too eager to explain, language fluency is just a small part of the story. Education, horse sense, and intuition all come into play. "And most important," insists Vladimir Pojidaeff, the AIIC's Western-hemisphere vice president, "is a gift, a talent, a knack for listening and thinking and interpreting all at once."

Constantin Andronikof, the ascetic-looking White Russian prince who is Charles de Gaulle's personal English and Russian interpreter, is a man who undoubtedly has that gift. He combines extraordinary talent with extraordinary dignity. Once, when Andronikof accompanied a group of French officials to Moscow, the story is that Nikita Khrushchev, who had met him earlier in Paris, burst out in Russian: "My dear Prince, how are you?"

Andronikof, one of the founders of the AIIC eleven years ago, is proud of the fact that no member has ever been charged with betraying a diplomatic secret. But, all in all, he has no illusions about his colleagues. They are, he says, vain and irritable—comparable to unhappy housewives. Why? Explains Andronikof: "It is a frustrating job for people with talent, for people who have something to say for themselves. By the nature of his work, the interpreter is only momentarily important. When his job is done, there is no way of ever proving it took place."

Newsweek, March 15, 1965

FRANCE:

The Gift of Tongues

Remember Audrey Hepburn, beautiful and sophisticated as the interpreter in "Charade"? Well, plenty of people do. Right now more than 20,000 men and women are going to school in Europe alone studying to be simultaneous interpreters. Many of them no doubt dream of becoming the gray eminences of twentieth-century diplomacy—indispensable adjuncts to the world's rulers in their polylingual debates over great affairs. Some may even hope to achieve eminence in their own right, following in the footsteps of such ex-interpreters

APPENDIX AConferences and Meetings in Canada that Have Used Interpretation

(This list was, at the time of printing, still in the course of preparation. It will be supplied under separate cover, for insertion in this place.)

APPENDIX BAIIC - TAALS CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCTI. AIM AND SCOPEArticle 1

- a) This Code sets forth rules of professional conduct for members of the Association.
- b) The provisions of the Code are binding upon members. Members are expected to assist the Council in enforcing them.
- c) Disciplinary measures contained in the Constitution may be taken against any member guilty of unprofessional conduct under the Code.

II. CODE OF ETHICSArticle 2

- a) Members of the Association shall be subject to strict professional secrecy. This applies to all persons and all information gathered in the course of non-public meetings attended in a professional capacity.
- b) No member shall derive personal profit or advantage from any confidential information acquired while acting in a professional capacity.

Article 3

Members of the Association shall refrain from accepting conference engagements they do not feel qualified to undertake. Acceptance shall be regarded as guaranteeing a high professional standard of interpreting.

Article 4

- a) Members shall refuse any employment or position which might prejudice the dignity of the profession or conflict with the observance of professional secrecy.
- b) Members shall refrain from any activities likely to bring discredit on the profession, including all forms of personal publicity.

Article 5

- a) Members of the Association pledge their unfailing support to their colleagues and to the profession as a whole.
- b) Any difficulty of a professional nature arising between two or more members may be referred to the Council for arbitration.

Article 6

Members of the Association shall refuse working conditions not in accordance with those laid down by the Association.

III. WORKING CONDITIONS

A) - General

Article 7

In the interests of good interpreting, members of the Association shall:

- a) Satisfy themselves that they can see and hear properly and that adequate provision is made for their comfort;
- b) Advise against simultaneous interpretation without booth if approached to do so under conditions not consistent with a high standard of interpreting;
- c) Not work alone in a booth without relief;
- d) Undertake to do whispered interpretation only under exceptional circumstances and for a maximum of two listeners;
- e) Try to see to it that interpreting teams are made up in such a way as to avoid regular use of relays.

B) - Free-lance Interpreters

Conference engagements

Article 8

- a) Members of the Association shall not accept any conference engagement without acquainting themselves fully with the terms beforehand; the Letter of Appointment shall be used in the form drawn up by the Association, or other appropriate form, for non-governmental conferences.
- b) When members are engaged as interpreters they may perform no other conference duties.

Article 9

- a) Members shall declare a professional domicile. No other may be used for professional purposes.
- b) The Executive Secretary shall be notified without delay of any change of professional domicile. Such changes may be made for a period of not less than six months.

Article 10

Members of the Association may request to be released from a conference engagement only if they are able to:

- a) give sufficient notice
- b) show good cause
- c) propose a substitute acceptable to the conference organizer.

Fees

Article 11

- a) A minimum scale of fees is kept by the Association and is appended to the Code.
- b) The fees are based on a daily rate. A full day's fee shall be payable for each day or fraction thereof covered by the conference engagement.
- c) Interpreting fees are quoted in U.S. dollars. The fees shall be transferable to the interpreter's country of domicile.
- d) Members of the Association engaged to work on the same team shall be paid at the same rate.

Article 12

- a) Fees shall be due for the entire period covered by the conference engagement, including Sundays and other non-working days.
- b) Fees shall be payable in full without deduction in respect of tax or commission.

Article 13

Members of the Association may give their services free of charge, provided they pay their own travel and subsistence expenses. (The Council may occasionally waive this provision).

Article 14 (Allowances and fees for travel days)

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Article 15 (Travel expenses)

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APPENDIX C

Letter of Appointment

(Short-form used for Canadian conferences)*

OFFICIAL LETTERHEAD OF CONFERENCE

ADDRESS

DATE

Dear Mr.....(name of interpreter/

1. Upon the advice of _____, we are pleased to confirm your appointment as conference interpreter for service with the _____/name of conference/ to be held at _____/address/ from _____ to _____ (dates and times)
2. Interpretation will be simultaneous/consecutive from English into French and French into English in _____ room(s).
The/Each team will consist of _____ conference interpreters.
3. Your professional fee will be \$75 per day for the _____ days of the conference. A cheque for the amount of _____ will be remitted to you at or before the close of the conference.
4. If the conference is being held away from your domicile, you will also be paid, on reporting for duty:
 - a) per diem : a subsistence allowance of \$20 for each 24-hour period or fraction thereof spent away from your place of residence;
 - b) transportation : the cost of 1st class air travel, plus \$20 for terminal expenses; and, if applicable
 - c) loss-of-earning allowance; an amount of _____ for each day or part thereof lost in travel status (provided no other fee is paid to you for that day).
5. If, for any valid reason, you should be prevented from fulfilling the duties of this appointment, you accept responsibility for ensuring your replacement by a qualified colleague.
6. Since you are reserving the dates in question for us, your professional fees will be payable to you even if the meeting were to be shortened or cancelled.
7. We will send you / through the Chief Interpreter / a copy of the Conference Program as soon as it is available. The texts of any papers to be read at the conference will be made available to you in advance of the meeting at which they are to be presented.
8. Will you kindly return a signed copy of this letter to indicate your acceptance of the terms of this offer.

Yours truly

signature of Conference official

I hereby accept the terms of this letter of Appointment

signature of interpreter

* A longer, more detailed and more formal contract, or letter of appointment, is customary for international conferences. Copies of the model are available from AIIC and TAALS.

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